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VOLUME VI

NUMBER 2

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SCOTT GODDARD (News Chronicle)

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# THE MUSIC REVIEW

VOL. VI, NO. 2

Edited by GEOFFREY SHARP

MAY, 1945

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
Gabriel Fauré, <i>Classic of Modern Times</i> . . . . . Norman Suckling . . . . .	65
The Songs of Gabriel Fauré . . . . . Leslie Orrey . . . . .	72
Bartók's Violin Concerto . . . . . Julian Herbage . . . . .	85
Rhythmic Freedom in Jazz . . . . . Mátyás Seiber . . . . .	89
Recording Desiderata . . . . . H. A. Hartley . . . . .	95
Concerts . . . . .	118
Reviews of Music . . . . .	71, 113
Book Reviews . . . . .	104
Gramophone Records . . . . .	121
Correspondence . . . . .	128

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(1901—1945)

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—*O Seculo*, Lisbon, 23.1.45.

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## *Gabriel Fauré, Classic of Modern Times*

BY

NORMAN SUCKLING

SOME twenty years ago Paul Dukas wrote as follows:—

"The enthusiasm hitherto aroused by the work of Fauré has necessarily, it would seem, fallen short of the importance that will be accorded to him in the future. Between the impressionism of yesterday and the dynamism of to-day, many have already found in his work a station of excellent augury for fresh departures; and there will be yet more to take their bearings from it in their journey towards the beauty of to-morrow."

The prophecy was a far-sighted one; for it overleaped the whole phase of musical development which has derived, since the days of the last war, from the feverish impulse of Central European energy. It looks forward to a time when much of the music belonging to that phase shall be understood, upon a more balanced estimate than any as yet generally reached, to depend excessively on a cult of "expression" as against expressiveness. It could not, of course, be widely realized for so long as that Central European cult was accepted by many as the only basis for musical "progress", treated by others as involving the whole of contemporary music in the condemnation they visited upon it, and grudgingly acknowledged by critics of a third party on account of its undeniable affinity with the latter-day Romanticism to which they attach so exaggerated a value.<sup>1</sup> For, as the art of French composers was perhaps less affected by "expressionism" than that of any other country, their potentiality in determining the future of music has therefore appeared correspondingly less in the eyes of many superficial observers; and it is not until the share of France in the guidance of European music is again comprehended at its true importance that we shall in this matter recover our critical equilibrium. The example of Fauré should then prove to be as essential a corrective of our musical outlook from the deflected vision of "expressionism" as his work was originally a prime factor in the deliverance of his country's music from the Romantic slough of despond. He was in this respect an unadvertised pioneer; one of his pupils, Émile Vuillermoz, wrote as early as 1909 that the boldest of musical explorers had everywhere found "the footsteps of Fauré, who, without haste or self-advertisement, had travelled over their wonderland before them"; and this is not the least of the reasons for which he deserves to be regarded as a classic for the twentieth century.

Moreover he helped to operate a recovery from a very advanced stage of musical decay. The middle years of the 19th century represented probably the lowest level to which general artistic sensibility in Europe ever descended; there is not one composer writing between about 1820 and 1870 whose work it is possible for a mind of any fineness of perception to admire without considerable reservations. Even those with claims to real greatness—Chopin, Schumann, Berlioz, Verdi, Wagner—suffer sooner or later from an

<sup>1</sup> I have in mind particularly Mr. Ernest Newman, who, one gathers, is attracted (if at all) to the study of Schönberg principally on account of that composer's close derivation from Mahler.

adherence to principles of composition which were part of the century's cardinal error about art in general and music in particular: the error of supposing that *expression* consisted in an outward resemblance with the accents of non-musical speech and behaviour. It was regarded as almost axiomatic in the 19th century that a "tone-poet"—a term invested with a halo of reverence by its attribution to Beethoven as a description of himself—was one who had imported these accents into music over and beyond anything done by a tonal *architect*; with the result that nearly all composition earlier than Beethoven was gratuitously assumed to be in that respect immature, and the gravest of musicologists found it desirable to edit the works of older composers as though apologizing for their shortcomings by the nineteenth century measure. The publicists of Romanticism loved to proclaim that the music of their preference, proceeding from the middle-period works of Beethoven, had breathed an emotional content into what had previously been an arrangement of "dry bones"; and the Romantic composers themselves were so far in agreement with this account of their endeavours that they tended to neglect musical invention properly so called. The vehemence of the Romantics' claim to have "emancipated" music from the eighteenth century "formalism" is equalled only by their uncomplaining readiness, as composers, to wear the strait-jacket of an outplayed diatonicism.

For this is the essential vice of all music which looked to the middle period of Beethoven as its model: that it deliberately restricted itself to an harmonic idiom whose possibilities had always been very limited and from which the best had already been extracted before any of the Romantic composers began to write. The purely (indeed narrowly) diatonic basis on which harmony and composition were taught in the 19th century as much as in the 18th, or even more, was one which Romantic musicians never apparently thought of disputing even while they attacked the traditional text-books on various other, mostly irrelevant, grounds. Their attitude towards the music of the 18th century amounted to a perpetuation of its worst failing while at the same time abandoning most of its artistic virtues; for, though they rejected the older composer's formal command of his emotional material as an offence against "tone-poetry", they unquestioningly accepted the major-and-minor diatonic idiom as a language towards which all previous forms of musical speech had been but an experiment. All of which is exemplified by the rapturous welcome they afforded to the German folk-songs, re-discovered as from about 1800 onwards, whose unsophisticated banality (described by its admirers as "naïve charm") was so influential in shaping the *Lieder* tradition, and whose insensitive change-ringing on the tonic and the dominant has even been impudently claimed as a virtue by German critics of our own day.<sup>2</sup>

The Romantic idiom was a spent vein almost as soon as ever it began to be worked; and the recovery of music towards the end of the 19th century depended on a realization that the search for "additional expressions of the obvious and new facets of the commonplace" was no relief from the exhaustion

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Adolf Weissmann in *The Problems of Modern Music*.



which had come upon the art, but that the first necessity was to free it from its servitude to the pervasive tonic-and-dominant principle which for so long had obliged composers to work, as Charles Koechlin put it, on a basis of leading-notes and dominant sevenths. Various factors contributed to bring about the release, but none more effectively than the re-discovery of the mediaeval Modes. The revival of plain-chant by such pioneers as Helmore and Niedermeyer, the latter of whom was Fauré's first teacher; the impact of Russian modal-flavoured music on the culture of western Europe; these and other episodes all helped to demonstrate that there is no need to emphasize the tonic of a scale by the close contact of a leading semitone, but that on the contrary such a practice tends to savour of an address to dull minds in words of one syllable. And thus it came about that while German music continued to labour under an obsession with leading-note diatonicism which is still to be detected even in the Expressionism of the 20th century, musicians of other nations, particularly France—fortified by the example of Russia and quickly followed by England—began to break fresh musical ground in a way which was neither Germanically trite nor Romantically over-inflected, but which indicated a real recrudescence of musical invention.

Now of course in 1865 (the approximate date of Fauré's earliest compositions) the artistic bankruptcy of Romantic music was as evident in France as elsewhere; in such writers as Adolphe Adam and Ambroise Thomas the French have their own quota to contribute to the almost incredible record of 19th century banality. But it remains true that France was in a position to restore her musical solvency more quickly than many other nations, because the essential vice of the century's tonal theory had not been successfully presented to the French in the guise of a revelation. Boieldieu and Adam might tinkle, but at least they did not profess to be ringing in a new era. French musicians had not been brought up to believe that an emphasizing of the obvious, by inflection or repetition, would render it less obvious; nor to accept the naïve babblings of Central European folk-music with the superstitious reverence of a Baedeker tourist. At a time when taste elsewhere was mostly declaring in favour of the diluted lyricism of *Lieder* and *Charakterstücke* and the fustian of sensational opera, they had welcomed as visitors or immigrants a number of composers—such as Reicha and Field in instrumental music and Rossini in the theatre—whose work, for the very reason that it retained some continuity with the 18th century, was to this extent a guarantee of their critical balance, that when Chopin arrived on their scene he ran up against no such predispositions among them as Wagner was later to encounter among the musicians of his nation. And, in particular, France had suffered less than almost any other country from the theological cult of Beethoven, at whose door (especially in his middle period) must be laid the chief responsibility for the 19th century's diatonic obsessions, and whose influence has almost fatally obscured his true value as a composer because it was exercised by means of his worst works—the 6th and 7th Symphonies rather than the late quartets, the *Emperor* Concerto rather than the early sonatas. By the time the Beethoven cult came to be preached in France at all, French music was already on

the road to recovery along its own lines; and even those directly concerned in the propaganda were not usually, in France, of the single-eyed fanatic type. Fauré's own teacher Saint-Saëns, for example, though his notion of the Beethovenian "tone-poetry" was such as to involve him in far too great an admiration for Liszt, compensated for it by an understanding of Bach, Rameau and other 18th century music which accounted for the most precious part of his instruction.

Thus the time was, if not ripe, at least reasonably propitious for a French composer who should reincarnate the musical virtues of the 18th century, while avoiding the trap which the diatonic idiom then established had inadvertently laid for the earlier 19th; who should lead music away from the inflected accents of Romantic exhibitionism towards a style whose expressiveness should once again rather be inherent in its notation; who should, in short, reassert the claim of artistic sensuality as against sentimentality. And this is precisely the position Fauré filled. In his chamber music—the department of his work in which his affinity with pre-Beethovenian art is perhaps most apparent—he attained a convincing unity, both in the totality of a work and in single movements, by means of a formal continuity which is reinforced by his habit of uniform figuration and by the absence of *sforzandi* or uncontrolled outbursts, and which gives to his successive themes the air of having grown one out of another

Ex.1  
(a) 2nd Piano Quartet, Op. 45



where even Brahms is sometimes in the last resort unsatisfying because of a too literal reliance on the principle of contrasted subjects. His pianoforte works are the record of a radical transformation from the *morceau de salon* of Chopin and Mendelssohn to a form in which the keyboard "lyric" became for the first time capable of a significance as great as that of the sonata in a previous age: a form in which Fauré brought about a deliverance from conventional notions of cadence and tonality, heralding some of the most remarkable experiments of Debussy and other subsequent writers

Ex.2 2nd Barcarolle, Op. 41



and standing at the far pole from the kind of music in which we are kept waiting for the resolution of a harmony whose fate was all too evident from the first.



A Fauré cadence normally arrives at its latter chord almost before we have become aware of the earlier:

**Ex.3** 12th Nocturne, Op. 107



And as a song-writer he established, even more than his contemporary Duparc, the type of the *mélodie* whose great virtue, over against the 19th century German *Lied*, is that it neither needs nor invites the outward semblance of "expression" in order to be emotionally telling, but asks purely for a performance that shall realize what is implicit in its musical substance—with which indeed the generally accepted adjuncts of "expressive" vocalism would merely interfere:

**Ex.4** Clair de lune, Op. 46, No 2

Tout en chantant sur le mode mi-neur L'a-mour vain-queur

et la vie op-por-tu-ne

All these qualities are combined in Fauré's exquisite Requiem. In one of its movements we are presented (as early as 1886) with a type of harmonic progression based on a series of chords of the seventh, whose value as an instrument of sensuous expressiveness has in no way been lessened by the passage of time:

**Ex.5** (Contraltos & Tenors)

de poe-nis in-fer ni

In another the timeless and transfigured world of his songs is evoked for the purpose of illustrating the eternal glory (*Sanctus*); while a third repeats in choral music the formal unity of his chamber works, by means of an inter-linked melodic pattern of a type in which he has had no equal since Bach:



The Requiem, for these and other reasons, attains at one and the same time a musical quality of the first order and a perfect aptitude for the liturgical purpose: a result not achieved by any other work for at least a century following the death of Mozart, but with a very essential bearing on the liturgical music of the present century.

The centenary of Fauré's birth (falling on 12th May of this year) is thus an appropriate date at which to observe how much more significant for the future of music he was than many futurists of a more self-advertising turn. The *Zukunftsmusik* of Richard Strauss and his compeers was still founded on the supposition that a kind of messianic revelation had been brought about in music by 19th-century Germany, and that is why it has now arrived at a dead end. Fauré on the other hand never succumbed to the musical astigmatism of supposing that the art culminated in a single classic period or converged on the figure of a single master, and for that very reason was more truly constituted to become a classic himself. As director of the Paris Conservatoire he was particularly diligent in correcting the notion that the "classics" merely meant the later 18th and early 19th century masters, and did all he could to familiarize the students with Monteverdi, Schütz and Rameau. Just as Pre-Raphaelitism was an essential stage in the deliverance of English pictorial art, so Fauré pointed the way to a pre-Beethovenism without which the musical renaissance of the 20th century could never have taken place. It is no accident that a revival of interest in Bach and Mozart, and in other masters of still earlier periods, should have characterized the age which for the first time since their epoch produced music worthy to stand beside theirs. Neither need we be surprised that Fauré's own seminal excellence as a composer, almost the earliest herald of the renaissance, should have been so intimately allied with his knowledge of older music; on the grounds already mentioned, and for the additional reason that this knowledge is one of the strongest bulwarks against that progressive democratization which is threatening the health of so much European art. In his age, and even more in our own, the very idea of the direction of taste by an élite with an awareness of standards was in process of being set aside, more and more extensively, in favour of an appeal to the crude sensibilities of undistinguished humanity. Fauré was enabled, partly by his

own predilections and partly as one of a nation whose art has never quite abandoned the indispensable aristocratic principle of its own essence, to inaugurate a counter-process; music in his hands, though it might undergo a more complete divorce than ever before from the common consciousness of mankind for so long as that consciousness was politically encouraged to follow its own demotic devices, was faithful to the lineage of great art in that it made no concession to the popular abandonment of standards, which is inevitably implicit in a "century of the common man". As against any such abandonment he set the example (as Louis Aguetant said in a memorial speech, from which I have also drawn the quotation from Dukas at the head of this article) of an art

"both sensitive and lucid, which is the noblest flower of our race. Henceforth Fauré will take his place alongside Rameau, Poussin and Racine, in the ranks of the purest French genius".<sup>3</sup>

### Reviews of Music

Arthur Bliss. *Auvergnat*, song for voice and piano. (Novello.) 2s.

Belloc's quasi-humorous words are not particularly bright, but the composer has somehow made a scholarly thing out of them, in which the "of it" and "in it" comes through without a hint of Irishry, which one would hardly have thought possible. The music suggests no locality; it is just competent.

E. J. Moeran. *Prelude* for violoncello and piano. (Novello.) 2s. 6d.

This tune in E major, accompanied almost persistently by bars of four crotchets in chords, is best described as "School of Londonderry Air", and a blasé posterity will probably earmark it as domestic after-blackening-out music of the middle '40s.

César Franck. *Choral* in E major, edited by Harvey Grace. (Novello.) 2s. 6d.

This is the first of three chorals, the composer's last work. Dr. Grace has introduced it with an interesting note stressing the variation form and the difference between French and English organs. Certainly the chromaticism is overdone (or rather evokes *Tristan*), but the musicianship is subtle, e.g. the apparently perfunctory codetta is a reminiscence of the first variation on p. 3. The recitative-fugato section in 4/4, of the sort beloved by the young Mendelssohn, has a very different aroma here, and hardly an organist can miss it.

E. H. W. M.

Edmund Rubbra. *The Revival* (S.A.T.B.) (op. 58). (Boosey & Hawkes.) 4d.

A gentle and contemplative setting for unaccompanied choir of an exquisite poem by Henry Vaughan. It is dedicated to the Rev. Walter Hussey and the choir of St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, a sponsor of the arts in religious worship rare to-day in the Church, and the man who commissioned Britten to write *Rejoice in the Lamb* and Henry Moore to carve the lovely Madonna and Child for his Church. Like all good choral music, this piece will sound far better than it looks, and far better in a church than in a hall, for there the sombre mystical quality of the music will attain its full beauty in the wide spaces and among the pillars. The spirit of Vaughan's words is well caught by Rubbra, and set with intelligible declamation. What is missing is that close epigrammatic quality of the metaphysical poets; the music drifts where Vaughan steers a neat course, and the result is a feeling that the song is not complete in the way Vaughan's verses are, but rather a portion of a longer piece of music.

H. J. F.

<sup>3</sup> Printed in the *Revue fédéraliste* for Oct., 1925.

## *The Songs of Gabriel Fauré*

BY

LESLIE ORREY

GABRIEL FAURÉ was born as long ago as 1845, and did not die until late in 1924. His first songs were published "about 1865",<sup>1</sup>—that is to say, when Brahms was a young man of 32, and 10 years before Ravel was born; his last composition, the String Quartet, was completed only a few days before his death, by which time Debussy had been 6 years in his grave. His long life, it will be seen, reaches back to the silver age of classical music, yet joins hands with our own time; and this is reflected in his art, which is a nicely balanced blend of tradition and heterodoxy, discipline and freedom. His relations, chronologically speaking, with his younger countrymen, Debussy and Ravel, afforded the opportunity for a repetition of that remarkable interplay of personalities and techniques which the world had witnessed a century or so before, between the greater minds of Mozart and Haydn. His position at the Paris Conservatoire, of course, gave him ample opportunity for active influence on his part, an influence which is generally acknowledged, at least on those who came directly under him as pupils. But there was nothing in his cast of mind to prevent him in his turn from sitting humbly at the feet of his contemporaries or juniors, provided he felt that they had anything of value to impart. He was a composer who developed continually throughout his life, and it is highly probable that his later works owed something at least spiritually to the work of the more well known French composers, even if his actual technique remained isolated and individual.

There will be no attempt in this article, at a critical appraisal of his music, in whole or in part. The time for such an assessment, at least in England, is not yet. The final judgment on any composer is not the work of any one man, or even of a group, however brilliant; the verdict, if it is to be worth while, must be collective, and the summing up by the judge demands a measure of knowledge, and even of appreciation, among the jury to which it is addressed. Until this stage is reached the most soberly written and enlightened estimate, and the most enthusiastic and shameless idolatry, are alike propaganda. In the case of Fauré conditions are especially difficult, because not only do we,—that is, English musicians as a whole,—know comparatively little of his music, but, nourished as we have been for generations on an almost exclusive Vienna-Leipzig-Halle-Three Choirs diet, the whole cultural background is missing. It may be that Fauré will never find a niche in our hearts alongside Chopin and Schumann and Schubert, or even Grieg; it is certainly true that many people have not considered so much as the possibility of his joining the ranks of even the lesser immortals. But such decisions should be based on experience, not ignorance and prejudice, still less on a docile

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<sup>1</sup> *Gabriel Fauré*. By Charles Koechlin. (Librairie Felix Alcan, Paris.)

submission to the dictates of fashion. We must get to know his music; its championship, not only by his fellow-countrymen but by many discerning musicians this side of the Channel, should hearten us for the effort.

Let us, first of all, take a quick bird's eye view of the more important of his compositions. Their number and scope should at once make us rather chary of dismissing his art as "slight," or limited in outlook. Not that a slender framework necessarily condemns an artist; few composers have been so restricted in medium as Chopin, yet his place is assured. But if in the face of the considerable number of his works in extended forms, the final verdict is that Fauré is simply a writer of attractive songs, a miniaturist, it must be after close examination of these works. Of the three mature choral and orchestral works only one, the Requiem, has been heard in England. *Pénélope* has been produced at Monte Carlo and Paris, but not, so far as I am aware, outside France and Belgium. The prospects of it being staged here are slender. There is even less chance of our hearing *Prométhée*, which was written for performance under very special conditions, in the open air in the vast Roman amphitheatre at Beziers, with massed choirs, orchestra, brass and military band. True, there are no symphonies—extant, at any rate,<sup>2</sup>—but that need not surprise us. The symphony is not a form that has appealed particularly to Frenchmen. But among his rather small output for orchestra there are two works with piano, the early *Ballade*, and the *Fantaisie*,—the latter a concerto in all but name. The chamber works form a solid phalanx, drawn up in serried ranks of two—two Violin Sonatas, two Cello Sonatas, two Piano Quartets and two Piano Quintets, with the Piano Trio and the String Quartet bringing up the rear—a total of ten in all. None of these can be called small works, though in some instances—e.g. the First Quintet and the String Quartet—he has contented himself with three movements instead of the usual four; but the four movements of the First Violin Sonata make up for this to some extent. The piano works, though including no sonata, can boast of one admittedly large scale work, the *Theme and Variations*; but you should not allow the titles of the other works to mislead you. The nocturnes, impromptus, preludes, etc., are by no means trifling in layout. They are mostly cast in a broad ternary form,—i.e. similar to the corresponding collections of Chopin or Field, but much more extended in development. They also demand considerable virtuosity (Fauré was not a prize winner at l'École Niedermeyer for nothing); and if we are tempted now and then to question the value of some of these pieces, we must remember that the same qualification applies to most other writers whose output is as large. In any case, there is no doubt about the finest: for example, the 7th *Nocturne*, deployed on a scale comparable with all but the largest sonata movements.

Finally there are the songs.<sup>3</sup> These number close on a hundred; and since

<sup>2</sup> One was written and, according to Grove, received at least one performance. The manuscript has apparently been destroyed.

<sup>3</sup> This is not a comprehensive catalogue. The tale of his writings extends to Op. 120, and includes, besides a quantity of incidental music (some of which, such as the score he wrote for the London production of *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1898, is becoming increasingly well known in England), a mass of odds and ends, the litter of Church music, occasional pieces, solos, etc., that every composer leaves behind for his biographers to clear up. Curiously enough, despite his long connection with the Church and his fame as an extempore player, there is no organ music.

they extend from around 1865 to a year or two before his death—that is to say, covering the whole of his active life as a composer—they form a convenient introduction to his music. Moreover, though numerous, their quantity is not so great as to be overwhelming, and compared with the 600 of Schubert, or even the output of Schumann, Wolf or Brahms, a survey of the whole field is by contrast a simple matter. An added reason for concentrating on the songs is that they are slightly more accessible to the English reader than the rest of his music. One or two (as usual, by no means the best) have actually attained considerable popularity; as usual, again, this popularity has by no means stirred curiosity as to the rest, and a great many fine songs remain to be introduced to both singers and public.

About half the songs are available in three sets of twenty, published originally by Hamelle. They include all those written between 1865 and 1905, with the exception of *La bonne Chanson*. The later songs, virtually unknown in England, and unfamiliar even in France, are almost all contained in four song cycles: two to poems by Van Lerberghe, *La Chanson d'Ève* and *Le Jardin clos*; *Mirages*, a cycle of four, words by the Baronne de Brimont; and lastly, a setting of four poems by a young poet killed in the last war, Jean de la Ville de Mirmont, entitled *L'Horizon chimérique*. To these must be added one or two isolated examples, such as *Le Don silencieux* and *C'est la paix*.<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that, without exception, he has sought inspiration from the writers of his own era; indeed, as he grew older he had recourse more and more not so much to his contemporaries as to the younger generation of poets. There is no harking back, as with Debussy, to Villon or Charles d'Orleans,—or as with our own musicians, to the lyrics of Elizabethan or Jacobean times.

The first set, though naturally uneven (the composer still largely untried, only just finding his feet) contains, besides some pretty and charming *chansons* such as *Les Matelots* and *Après un Rêve*, a few fine songs (*Seule, Chant d'Automne*) and one near masterpiece, *Lydia* (marred only by a too insistent dominant seventh in each strophe). But although vastly inferior in musical worth to the subsequent volumes it has the interest which attaches to the first utterances of any writer.<sup>5</sup> The child is father to the man, and in these early works we can see the outline of some of those traits which are to cling to him all his life. There is in these songs no more than a hint of the harmonic complexity of his middle period, and certainly no trace of the concentrated thought of his last years; but this very simplicity is a virtue, since it permits us to examine without distraction certain characteristics which are typical of him, and which the subtleties of his later works might perhaps obscure. We note first of all a refinement of taste, a certain delicacy and carefulness of expression, which manifests itself in many ways from almost his earliest songs. For example, *Tristesse*, which M. Koechlin finds dull, by reason of its four-fold strophic

<sup>4</sup> M. Jankélévitch, in his *Gabriel Fauré et ses Mélodies*, mentions another song, *Aurore*, in MS., in the library of the Paris Conservatoire; there is also *Mélisande's Song* which he wrote (to English words) for the production of *Pelléas* at the Prince of Wales' theatre in 1898. It is conceivable that there are others.

<sup>5</sup> The first ten Opus numbers are entirely devoted to vocal music; the first purely instrumental music is the A Major Violin Sonata, published in 1876.



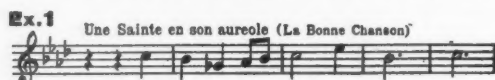
repetition, is saved by its accompaniment which, insignificant on paper, is quite delicious in performance. One notices it too in the individual approach to cadences, in the unconventional spacing of the harmonies, and in the virtual avoidance of that commonplace of Teutonic development, the sequence. One of the few examples of strict sequence to be found in his early works is in the scherzo of the first Violin Sonata where each "limb" of the sequence is a 5-bar phrase. There are practically no examples in the first set of songs; indeed Fauré will often go out of his way to avoid strict repetition, even when the phrase seems to demand it, as in the quotation from *Au Bord de l'Eau* (Ex. 8) or—an even clearer illustration—the first few bars of the popular *Après un Rêve*.

One can see now that his leaning towards the less usual melodic and harmonic progressions was almost certainly fostered by his schooling which, first at l'École Niedermeyer and later under Saint-Saëns, leaned heavily in the direction of Plainsong and the Gregorian Modes. There are examples in this first set; for instance, the sharpened 4th, a characteristic of the Lydian scale, and a prominent feature of *Lydia* (recurring constantly in his later works; e.g. *Le Secret*, the final cadence of *Une Sainte en son auréole*); also, a decided fondness for mediant harmony, in both major and minor keys. And, finally, there are many songs in this first set which demonstrate clearly his very considerable mastery in the matter of accompaniment. *Les Matelots*, *Tristesse*, *Aubade*, in their several styles, offer examples of persistent figuration in the piano part, carried out with the ease and skill we associate with Schubert; a skill approaching virtuosity when it becomes allied with the more elaborate harmonic idiom of his later style.

But the Schubertian accompaniment, however delightful and appropriate in the hands of a master, is by no means the only legitimate method of song writing—despite the overwhelming emphasis given to it by the composition text books; and some of Fauré's finest and most characteristic songs are based on a much simpler procedure. There is, after all, something dangerously approaching *rodomontade* in the second song from *La bonne Chanson*—a suggestion of the rather facile exuberance of, say, Schumann's *Widmung*. The songs that leave the deepest impression are often those exhibiting much more economy of means (think of the tremendous effect of *Der Doppelgänger*, for instance); and we find Fauré adopting a special technique—indeed, almost a negation of technique—in the use of chords in straightforward block harmony. *Seule* and *Lydia*, from the first book, are witness to the effectiveness of this simplicity; and examples of a similar nature are constantly recurring among the later songs—cf. *Le Secret*, *Le Parfum impérissable*, *Spleen*, *Green*, right up to *Prima Verba*, from *La Chanson d'Ève*; to *Dans la Nymphée*, from *Le Jardin clos*; and to *Diane Séléne*, from *L'Horizon chimérique*.

We have spoken of his leaning towards the less usual chords and progressions, the less conventional melodic intervals. It is interesting, in view of later developments in music, and in French music in particular, to examine two of these personal idioms in some detail. The interval of the augmented fourth, it is true, is not peculiar to Fauré; there is precedent for it in French music, and

I suspect it may be closely allied to the idiosyncracies of the French language. There is at least some affinity between it and the nasal quality of spoken or sung French; at any rate, such a phrase as the following (Ex. 1) from *La bonne*





innovator he is. It was such progressions as these that caused him to be dubbed a "dangerous revolutionary" by Ambroise Thomas, Lenepveu and others (*cf.* Koechlin, p. 17). It must be added that such approximations to the whole tone technique of Debussy are hints only, and form no considerable fraction of his style; such a complete version of the scale as Ex. 7 (from the fifth *Impromptu*, 1910) is a rare exception.

**Ex.7** Opening of 5th Impromptu, Op.102 (1910)  
♩ = 1/4 *Allegro vivo*



Having found so many prophetic turns in this one field, it is no mere idle curiosity which prompts us to seek for further resemblances between the two composers, Fauré and Debussy (anticipations, if you will). We shall find that there are hints in Fauré of all sorts of sharp practices that have been brought fully within the law by the younger composer. Ex. 8 shows a succession of

### Ex.8 Au bord de l'eau



fundamental sevenths, from *au Bord de l'eau*, written at any rate before 1870, and possibly before 1865; that is to say, at least 17 years before Satie's *Sarabandes* (1887), and 26 years before the Sarabande in Debussy's *Pour le piano*. Other examples of this "parallelism" are the consecutive ninths in *Prison* (Ex. 9), the consecutive 4/2's, in *Le Parfum impérissable* (Ex. 10), and the

**Ex.9** Prison (c. 1895)



### Ex.10 Le Parfum imperissable



sequence of ascending  $4/2$ 's from the eighth *Barcarolle*, quoted in Ex. 11. But



again it is necessary to point out that such progressions never became mannerisms, and, like the allusions to the whole tone technique, are only ripples on the surface of his music.

It should be noted, by the way, that there are no grounds for supposing Debussy to have been ignorant of Fauré's music; indeed, there is ample evidence to the contrary. Mere proximity in time or place, or both, has too often been taken as evidence of one composer's influence on another, quite overlooking the fact that each may be far too engrossed in his own work to pay the slightest attention to anyone else. They may in fact be led to identical conclusions along different paths, and quite independently of each other; just as in another walk of life Newton and Leibnitz arrived at a simultaneous discovery of the Calculus. But in this case there can be no doubt that much of Fauré's music was known to Debussy. The latter's journalistic work brought him into contact with at least one of them (the early *Ballade*); there was no lack of it printed; he had the entrée to the important Société Nationale Concerts; and Madame Bardac, one of the best of Fauré's interpreters and the dedicatee of *La bonne Chanson*, became Debussy's second wife. Moreover, the two composers were certainly acquainted with each other. It is not, of course, claimed that Fauré was a dominating factor in Debussy's evolution; the impact of the new Russian composers, Mussorgsky in particular, was no doubt the true origin of that breakaway apparent in Debussy's style from about 1890 onwards. But this was probably largely a "trigger" action, releasing energy that had been storing up for some time; it clarified and brought to a head ideas that had been simmering over a period of years, and not in Debussy's head alone. The point I would make is, that, in addition to the acknowledged debt owed to Satie and Chabrier among French musicians, there may have to be added another, to the quieter and subtler audacities of Fauré.\*

The second and third volumes show Fauré more and more master of his medium; the songs date from his most prolific period, from about 1880 (*Nell*) to 1900 or a little later, and before he became overburdened with administrative work in connection with the Paris Conservatoire (he was appointed Director in 1905). If they are not all masterpieces, each one attains a high standard;

\* In the latest biography of Debussy in English, that of Lockspeiser, Fauré is barely mentioned; but Fauré's significance has not been entirely overlooked, at least by French critics. Cf. the article "Gabriel Fauré" in the special number of *La Revue musicale*, October, 1922, by Emile Vuillermoz, wherein the author emphasizes the disparity between the scandalized horror which greeted the temerities "prudentes et espacées" of Debussy's *Printemps* or Ravel's *Pavane*, and the indifference of the authorities in the face of the "menaces" of Fauré's "seditious tracts". The whole article is worthy of attention.

and with the third set in particular it is more a question of which to leave out than which to recommend. And though he was developing all the time, though there is a tremendous gulf between the pretty little tunes of Opus 1 and that magnificent song, *La Forêt de Septembre*, there is nothing in their idiom or style to stand in the way of their appreciation, if they were given half a chance. It must suffice to mention only one or two points of special interest. *Fleur jetée* is a striking and virile song, revealing a rough side to his character totally absent from the first volume. Its accompaniment will daunt all but the most steely wristed of pianists! *Adieu*, the third of the three comprising *Poème d'un jour*, is one of those simple accompaniments in which he was so successful; but note the masterly variation on the return of the theme (the song is in ternary form)—simplicity itself, but the astonishing simplicity we find sometimes in the mature Beethoven. (An exactly parallel case is to be found in *Aurore*). Then turn to *La Rose*, and examine that marvellous shimmering passage, to the words "Ruisselante encor du flot paternel", etc., bars 29 *et seq.*

**Ex. 12** *La Rose* (Bar 29 *et seq.*)

Andante ♩ = 60

8va ..... Ruis - so

pp tranquillement

8ve

8ve sim.

2da

lante en - cor du flot pa - ter - nel etc.

(Ex. 12). All five *Mélodies de Venise* (*Mandoline*, *En Sourdine*, *Green*, *C'est l'Extase*, *A Clymène*), words by Verlaine; *Prison*, *Larmes*, *Soir*, *Au Cimetière*,—all are fine songs, all compel our attention. There is nothing provincial about them; that is to say, their excellence does not consist merely in clothing the French language in the finest and most fitting raiment. No doubt an intimate understanding of French is a tremendous help towards their appreciation, just as a knowledge of German adds to the pleasure of Schubert, Brahms and Wolf. But a great song is more than the matching of words with "just note and accent"; there must be a universal appeal which transcends mere national and linguistic boundaries, and it is not too much to claim just this quality for these fine songs of Gabriel Fauré.

The climax of this period is reached in the nine songs which compose *La bonne Chanson*. It would be impossible to discuss Fauré's songs, or indeed

any facet of his art, without devoting considerable attention to this work. He himself held the cycle in great affection, and it has exerted an almost hypnotic effect on his commentators (Koechlin, for instance, finds it necessary to refer to it on almost every other page). The poems are all by Verlaine, from his cycle of the same name; Fauré has set only 9 out of the 21, but *La bonne Chanson* is as closely identified with him as *Winterreise* with Schubert, or the *Dream of Gerontius* with Elgar. The work dates from 1891: his first setting of Verlaine, the fine *Clair de lune*, was written four years earlier, and the five "Venice" songs, mentioned in the previous paragraph, had only just been finished (in 1890). *Spleen* was composed about the same time, and *Prison*, the last of the Verlaine songs, came only a few years later. *La bonne Chanson* forms an epitome of his mature style; it is also the zenith and culmination of that style. Thereafter his technique is to undergo a progressive concentration and simplification, carried almost to extreme in his last songs. Some symptoms of the later style are already apparent; e.g. a tendency towards more and more linear writing. It is perhaps exaggeration to call it counterpoint; compared with the absolute standards of Bach, Byrd and Palestrina, Fauré was no polyphonist. The canons which we are invited to admire (by M. Koechlin and others) in the Requiem and *Pénélope*, are small beer considered purely as canons—just as the last movement of Franck's Violin Sonata is. This in no way detracts from their excellence as music; Bach's Organ Fugue in D Minor is a poor specimen compared with his greatest, but it remains a tremendous and inspiring piece of music for all that. Even the effectiveness of a canon *qua* canon is often in inverse proportion to its ingenuity, and indeed the simplicity and transparency of the Franck example offers a first rate illustration of this. There is no doubt however, that Fauré, like so many composers before and since, was driven more and more as he got older to the horizontal conception of music. There have been suggestions of this before, for instance in the bare two-part writing of *A Clymène*, in the *Madrigal* (from *Shylock*), and in the independent lines in the accompaniment to *La Rose*. The tendency is rather more marked in *La bonne Chanson*—e.g. the opening of *Une Sainte en son auréole* . . . , *J'allais par des Chemins perfides* . . . , and the closing bars of *La Lune blanche* . . . —and is carried farther still in the later works, such as *Exaucement*, and the strict part-writing of *Cygne sur l'Eau*.

Then, too, there is the ellipsis, to which his thought for a long time has been tending. Consider, for example, the opening phrase of *J'ai presque peur* . . .

**Ex. 13** *J'ai presque peur*

*J'ai pres-que peur en ve-ri té Tant je sens ma vie en-la - cé - e*

(Ex. 13) and note how condensed and compact it is. One has to be quick-witted to follow these swift and fleeting modulations. Similar instances can be found in most of the numbers; e.g., *J'allais par* . . . , and *Une Sainte* . . . This can be traced back quite clearly, through *Green* and many others in the third book, *Le Secret* in the second, and even to *Après un Rêve* in the first.

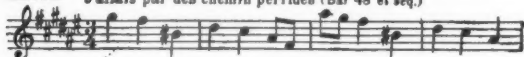
The later style, however, shows a reversion to simplicity and clearer tonality; there is, for example, in the whole of *Le Jardin clos* no "unvocal" interval, no phrase which by any stretch of imagination can be regarded as difficult to sing. But the subtlety is there still; the accompaniments in particular, deceptively simple, are continually exploiting the harsher dissonances, are ever ready to slip from the broad and safe diatonic highway into all manner of untried modal bypaths.

A considerable amount of thematic connection can be traced between the various songs. M. Jankélévitch<sup>7</sup> identifies no less than five themes which make their appearance from time to time, though no single one occurs in every song. It is not easy to detect all the allusions which he discovers; but no great skill or imagination is required to discern the following. 1. Ex. 14, from *Une Sainte* . . . , reappears in easily recognisable form in *J'allais par* . . . , and *L'Hiver a cessé* (Exs. 15, 16). 2. The opening phrase of the early *Lydia*,

**Ex.14** Une Sainte en son aureole (Bar 15 et seq.)



**Ex.15** J'allais par des chemin perfides (Bar 48 et seq.)



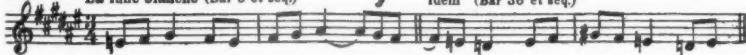
### Ex.18 L'Hiver a cessé



**Ex.17** Lydia.



**Ex.18** La lune blanche (Bar 9 et seq.)      idem (Bar 36 et seq.)



**F-19** J'ai presque peur (Bar 19 et seq.)



(Ex. 17), is heard clearly in *La Lune blanche . . .*, and *J'ai presque Peur* (Exs. 18, 19), and there is a distinct aroma of it in several other songs,—e.g. the sharpened fourth in No. 2, *Puisque l'Aube grandit*. No special significance, by the way, need be attached to this quotation from an earlier song; the little rising scale passage of three or four notes is a distinctive feature of his melody:

<sup>2</sup> *Fauré et ses Mélodies*. By Vladimir Jankélévitch. (Librairie Plon, Paris, 1938.) A most interesting and useful work which goes into all the songs in some detail, and devotes a considerable section to the history, significance and technical aspect of *La bonne Chanson*.

the syncopations, too, are highly characteristic, as can be seen from a study of the first movement of the 1876 Violin Sonata, for instance. We shall have occasion to note other examples of the same phrase, or derivatives from it, in considering the last songs. 3. There are one or two harmonic progressions, impossible to illustrate without rather more extended quotation, which occur from time to time. The remaining references noted by M. Jankélévitch, though tangible and no doubt intentional, are not apparent without close study, and are not such as would be revealed on a first hearing. But it is clear that the cycle is a work of considerable complexity, from the point of view of both performer and listener; the music lover who comes to *La bonne Chanson* knowing only such simple, monodic pieces as *Après un Rêve*, or the *Sicilienne* from *Pelléas*, may excusably be surprised at its range. Actually, Fauré is far from being so limpid and naïve as these and other similar works suggest; in fact, the sooner we realize that his intellect was of the first order, the sooner shall we begin to see him and his music in proper perspective.

The next decade saw the production of several important works, including the incidental music for *Pelléas*, the *Theme and Variations* and the 7th *Nocturne* for piano, the lyric tragedy *Prométhée*—but few songs. What few there are, however, are of vast importance, and indeed *Prison*, *Le Parfum impérissable* and *Le Forêt de Septembre* must certainly be ranked among his masterpieces. He was now (1903) approaching his 60th year; but still vigorous, and with an astonishing amount of work yet before him. The bulk of the chamber music had yet to be written; *Pénélope* was as yet unborn, and the realm of piano literature was to be enriched by the nine *Préludes* and the *Fantaisie* for piano and orchestra, as well as by a number of the nocturnes, barcarolles, etc. And in these last 20 years of his life the song form and its attendant problems once more attracted him. He seems to have undergone a revulsion from all the poets who had previously satisfied him, for even Verlaine, who had been such a stimulus to him a few years before, was never called upon again.<sup>8</sup> We see him turning more and more eagerly to the younger writers, a sign of the vigour and youthfulness of his mind. *La chanson d'Ève* is from the period 1907–10, *Le Jardin clos* belongs to the war years; for both of these he went to the Belgian poet Van Lerberghe. *Mirages* was written in 1919, and he took his farewell to song with the four poems of *L'Horizon chimérique*, in 1922. It is our loss that we know so little of these.

Very little acquaintance with these songs is needed to see how strikingly removed they are from his early and middle manner. The very appearance of the printed page is different, the leanness and economy of means at once leap to the eye. (This implies neither praise nor blame; art has nothing to gain by appropriating the morality of the age of want and exalting thrift to the rank of an artistic principle.) Gone are the sweeping arpeggios of *Puisque l'Aube grandit* and *Arpège*, the elaboration of *Accompagnement*, the swiftly modulating vocal line of *Green* or *Soir*. Instead we have the transparent two part writing of *Exaucement* (Ex. 23), the delicate, discreet figuration of *La*

<sup>8</sup> The only exception to this is the harp solo, *Une châtelaine en sa tour*, written in 1918.



*Messagère*, and in all of them the unpretentious and seemingly innocent vocal line of which the quotation from *Il m'est cher* must serve as a sample (Ex. 22). This bareness and economy of means is perhaps seen at its most extreme in *Danseuse*, from *Mirages* (Ex. 20); for 31 bars the accompaniment is so slender that it can be compressed with ease on a single staff; but there are several other competitors for the honour. *Diane Séléné* (from *L'Horizon chimérique*) shows his "block chord" type of accompaniment with the notes reduced to the minimum consistent with clearness—two pages of absolute simplicity. *Quand tu plonges* exploits the hesitant syncopations of *C'est l'Extase*, *J'ai presque peur*, etc., simplified and subtilized. *Je me poserai . . .* and *Dans la pénombre*

**Ex.20** *Danseuse* (Voice)

(similar acct. for 18 bars)

**Ex.21** *Dans le penombre* (Voice)

**Ex.22** *Il m'est cher, amour*  
Allegro

Il m'est cher, A-mour, le ban-deau qui me tient les pau-piè-res, clo - ses

**Ex.23** *Exancement*

etc.

**Ex.24** *Dans le penombre*

(both from *Le Jardin clos*) show these syncopations in the bass, the latter with the characteristic little ascending scale *motif* that has already been remarked—cf. *Lydia*, *Nell*, *Quand tu plonges*, and many others. Even the key signatures reflect this same mood of austerity; *Dans la Nymphée* is exceptional, and with the adoption of the luscious D flat we get at the same time something of a return to the manner of *Soir* and *Le Secret*. In No. 8, *Inscription sur le sable*,

the last of *Le Jardin clos*, we have a rival to *Danseuse* for complete and absolute simplicity.

It should be noted that this simplicity is strictly confined to *texture*; harmonically he is as ready as ever to indulge in the asperities of major sevenths and minor seconds, intervals which have attracted him from the very first. From a wealth of passages crying aloud for illustration there is space for one only (Ex. 24), from *Dans le pénombre*. And, as noted earlier, the innocent vocal line is often belied by the accompaniment, which has dark hints of mystery cunningly hidden beneath its spare form. The harmony is, however, diatonic or modal; in all this late music there is very little suggestion of whole tone technique. It does occur, exceptionally, in *Reflets dans l'Eau*; and in this song he has been impelled by the imagery to rather more elaboration than was customary with him at this time (bar 35 *et seq.*). Fauré was as susceptible to the suggestion of fountains and lakes as Debussy or Ravel; witness his many barcarolles, both instrumental and vocal, and the large number of songs from the early *Matelots* to *La Mer est infinie*, which proclaim this inspiration in title and texture.

To sum up: we have in this body of about a hundred songs, a mass of music, largely neglected, which will well repay close study. The above notes make no pretence at being an exhaustive account of this output; they are admittedly one-sided, though not, I hope, biassed. But if all the emphasis has been on the technical aspect, with no discussion of his approach to the poets' thought, that has been intentional. If his work is to be accepted here it must be on account of its musical appeal, irrespective of his aptitude for setting the French language to music, and over and above the qualities which appeal specifically to Frenchmen. In any case, this aspect of his art must be dealt with by abler pens than mine. The first condition for its acceptance is that it shall be available for study, and of course the long war years have been a very serious handicap. His music is almost unobtainable; in particular, the last songs are not to be had at any price. It is to be hoped that this disability will be speedily removed. But also, as I suggested earlier, his final acceptance depends on a wide experience of his music, spread over the whole field of music-lovers, and not confined to those to whom France and its civilization makes a particular appeal. This inevitably demands translation. The songs, though at their best, naturally, in their original language, should (at any rate, some of them) make a strong appeal in the vernacular. If some publisher would be enterprising enough to produce a volume containing some of the best of the three Hamelle collections with good translations, it would provide a little of the stimulus needed to jolt the musical world, and particularly the singing portion of it, in his direction. Once people have got to know his songs in the same way that they have learnt Schubert and Brahms, namely, by singing them, we can safely leave the art of Fauré to speak for itself. It will be time enough then to determine his precise place in the hierarchy of song.



## *Bartók's Violin Concerto*

BY

JULIAN HERBAGE

"THERE is much talk these days", wrote Bartók recently, "about the purity and impurity of the human race, the usual implication being that purity of race should be preserved, even by means of prohibitive laws". Then followed a most interesting article on folk music, a subject on which Bartók writes with a wider knowledge than any other musician alive to-day. For forty years he has carried out active research into the folk music of Eastern Europe. Occasionally, to use his own words, he has "made a jump" into more remote countries in North Africa and Asia Minor to "gain a broader outlook", and has supplemented his own active research with the more "passive" investigation of material collected and published by others.

Bartók's conclusions on the subject of Race Purity in Music are interesting for two reasons: firstly, for their own sake, and secondly, for the insight they provide into Bartók's ideals and methods as a composer. Racial purity, in Bartók's view, leads to sterility. On the contrary (again to quote his words) "Contact with foreign material not only results in an exchange of melodies, but—and this is still more important—it gives an impulse to the development of new styles. At the same time, the more or less ancient styles are generally well preserved, too, which still further enhances the richness of the music."

This musical cross-breeding is at the root of Bartók's work as a creative composer. Not only has he absorbed the music of the people—of many peoples—but he has constantly "crossed" its essential features with impulses from art music. He has evolved a musical style and vocabulary—a very personal one—which, though it springs from the soil, is developed and constructed in what, for want of a better word, must be described as a "classical" tradition. Bartók's development of this personal idiom has been carried on throughout his whole creative career. Though the influences, both of folk-music and art-music, which he has absorbed from time to time, have made superficial changes in his style, the underlying principles have always directed him towards the same goal. As a result, at the age of sixty-three he is still a centre of controversy.

Henry Cowell, the American composer, has admirably described this constant development. He wrote:

"Recognizing very early that conventional chords and rhythm-patterns (as evolved in Western European music) are not adequate to develop a classical music in the spirit of folk-culture, Bartók began to experiment with materials that suggested themselves as he observed what Hungarian folk players actually *do* in their music. . . . He found that they sometimes sing and play in two or more scales at once, so he experimented with polytonality. He found that they sometimes use biting discords to emphasize dance rhythms; so he experimented with the use of discord to enhance rhythm. By careful weeding out of experiments that had nothing to do with the feeling of traditional music, he has evolved a style which owes little to other composers. This style has been developed, through feeling and intelligence, directly from folk sources in combination with familiar classical forms."

It was fortunate for Bartók that his musical education proceeded on a balanced plan. Until he was eighteen he was steeped in the German classics from Bach to Brahms—of Wagner he knew only *Tannhäuser*. His early works, mostly subsequently withdrawn, owe much to Brahms. At the age of twenty-three he heard Strauss' *Also sprach Zarathustra* for the first time at Budapest. The city was indignant; Bartók was fired with enthusiasm. As late as 1910 the repercussions of the musical revolution in Western Europe had scarcely reached the Hungarian capital. Debussy's music was almost unknown, practically nothing of Stravinsky or Schönberg had been performed. And so it happened that, parallel with his researches into folk music, Bartók absorbed, separately, and with consequently greater effect, the whole-tone scale of Debussy, the vital yet sophisticated rhythms of Stravinsky, the atonality of Schönberg. All along, these theories of art-music were tested against the practical basis of his expanding knowledge of folk-music, and the synthesis provided Bartók with an increasingly individual yet fundamental musical vocabulary.

A realization of this constant artistic process in Bartók's creative growth is essential to the full understanding of his violin Concerto. The work was commissioned by Zoltan Szekely, and written in Budapest in the years 1937 and 1938. It should be put on historical record that this was the heyday of the virtuoso violinist, an age when the soloist himself became the patron of the composer. One is reminded of Louis Krasner's commissioning of the Berg Concerto and Heifetz' of the Walton. Luckily, in none of these cases did the composer respond merely with a *pièce d'occasion*. Bartók's Concerto represents the composer at his full maturity.

In certain respects the very original form of the violin Concerto can be said to be a development of the second piano Concerto. But whereas the earlier work seems in the main to evolve from a mechanical process of creation, the violin Concerto seems more essentially rooted in musical soil. After a short introduction, the theme of which, in the basses, plays an important part later in the movement, the solo violin announces a subject which in its essence has an affinity to Hungarian folk-song.

**Ex. 1 Allegro non troppo 2/4 100**

It should, however, be noticed how readily this theme lends itself to imitation in canon—a typical example of Bartók's musical fertilization equally from folk and art sources. Again, the repeated interval of a fourth, which provides so much of the Hungarian atmosphere, is made the basis for much of the

structural development, and, indeed, of the harmonic construction, a great deal of which depends upon superimposed fourths. After a short *tutti*, consisting of the essential features of this opening theme, a transitional subject of chromatic character is introduced as a dialogue between the soloist and woodwind in rushing semiquaver passages. This subject, by the way, bears quite a marked resemblance to the similar transitional passage in the second piano Concerto.

The music, as is typical with Bartók, having gained a sudden impetus, is almost equally suddenly relaxed for the second subject to make its appearance. This latter theme is unusual in that it consists of repetitions, in different order, of all the notes of the twelve-tone scale. Unlike Schönberg, however, who, when he has once set the order of the twelve notes, never alters it during a composition, Bartók uses this scale to provide a stream of melodic patterns on the solo violin, interrupted by pianissimo passages, also in the whole-tone scale, by the orchestra. Bartók is reputed to have said that he wrote this section to show Schönberg that one could compose in the whole-tone scale and still preserve a sense of melody and tonality. A certain amount of plausibility is given to this tale by the fact that, after several of these "variations", the orchestra—particularly the trombones—blow the soloist what sounds suspiciously like a fortissimo musical "raspberry", at which the soloist, in embarrassment, rushes into a semiquaver version of the whole-tone variations, to be checked by an even louder and more shattering comment from the brass. As if thoroughly ashamed, the soloist now turns from the pedagogic to the lyrical, and there follows a lovely passage derived from the bass theme of the introduction, in which, as in the introduction, the harp takes a prominent part.

This marks the end of the exposition; with the development section it is impossible to deal without recourse to numerous musical quotations. Its main lines have been foreshadowed by indicating the potentialities for musical exploitation possessed by the first subject. It need only be added that Bartók makes the most of the rhythmic implications of all his material. Before the recapitulation, however, an interesting feature is the return of the first theme in inversion, after which, subject to the fact that Bartók never either repeats himself nor ties himself rigidly to a classical form, the music progresses towards the cadenza and short coda more or less "according to plan".

The second movement consists of a theme with six variations. Over a light accompaniment of strings (without contrabasses), harp harmonics and occasional punctuation from the timpani, the solo violin quietly announces this theme, again of Hungarian flavour.

As a tailpiece its final bars are taken up romantically by the full orchestra, again with the harp in prominence.

In the first variation the soloist elaborates on the theme to a spare accompaniment provided mainly by pianissimo contrabasses and timpani; in the second variation harp, celesta and upper woodwind share the honours with the solo violin. The third variation quickens in tempo, and is written for the soloist in double-stopped semiquavers, with horns, bassoons and timpani bearing the main duty of accompaniment. For the fourth variation, a variant

of the theme is heard in unison on cellos and basses, while the soloist rhapsodizes with trills and rapid scale passages in the traditional tzigane style. The fifth

**Ex. 2** Andante tranquillo  $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 92$

variation is an allegro scherzando, and in the last the strings take up the theme in pizzicato quavers, punctuated by short, sharp drum rolls, on top of which the soloist provides an elaborate tracery. Finally, to round off the movement—which, incidentally, is a miracle of subtle orchestration—the soloist repeats the theme in the upper octave.

The Finale was described to me by Yehudi Menuhin as a sort of mirror of the first movement. This analogy is very just if one can imagine a mirror capable of reflecting the individual and romantically-shaped themes of the first movement into a more conventional and classical pattern. Mark, for instance, the opening subject; it still bears the character of Example 1, but it is now cast into more formal shape. Its potentialities for musical development are consequently greater.

**Ex. 3** Allegro molto  $\text{♩} = 76$

Again, as in the first movement, it is followed by a short *tutti*, based on its essential characteristics, and our chromatic transitional theme, also reshaped by the "mirror", leads into an almost waltz-like version of the twelve-tone second subject. Once more, just before the recapitulation, the first subject returns in inversion, but at the conclusion, as if to compensate for the formality of the opening, there is a passage, which, at least in its harmonic idiom, reminds us of the romantically traditional mood in which the Concerto began.

# Rhythmic Freedom in Jazz?

A STUDY OF JAZZ RHYTHMS

BY

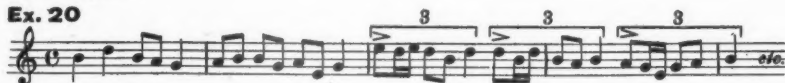
MÁTYÁS SEIBER

[Continued from p. 41.]

The 3/4 against 4/4 cross-rhythm is by no means peculiar to Jazz. It is one of the simplest and most elementary polyrhythmic devices, of which examples can be found all over the world.

Here, for example, is an Indian tune, clearly showing the 3/4 against 4/4 principle:

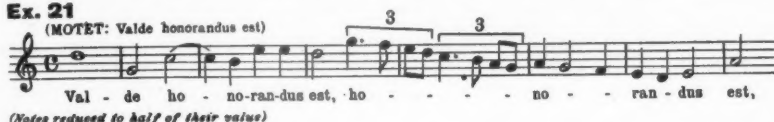
**Ex. 20**




Our European music, too, is full of similar instances from widely different ages and by different composers. No one could be further in spirit from Jazz than Palestrina with his careful avoidance of any sharp rhythmical features; but many instances like the following can be found in his music:

**Ex. 21**

(MOTET: Valde honorandus est)



(Notes reduced to half of their value)

Through the suspension of the C in the fifth bar a gentle tension is created which stems the rhythmic flow for a moment. By the regularity of the pattern  a 3/4 cycle is created and our ear is inclined to interpret the C with its increased weight as the beginning of a new group. In another example the 3/2 grouping goes on much longer, regardless of bar-lines, and by the regular alternation of two different rhythmic patterns in 3/2 it shows an additional 6/2 cycle as well:

**Ex. 22**

(MISSA "ASSUMPTA EST MARIA" Credo)



The composers of the English madrigal school—especially Byrd, Morley and Gibbons—are particularly known for making great use of polyrhythmic devices. Here are a few examples showing 3/4 cycles superimposed on a 4/4 metre:

**Ex. 23**

(Morley: "WHY SIT I HERE COMPLAINING?")



**Ex. 24***(Merley: CANZONET 19 "ARISE, GET UP")*

fine - ly set a - loft, there a - gain as oft, O bless - ed  
 then a trip, fine - ly set a - loft, hey - ho fine brave  
 trip, fine - ly set a - loft, all for fair Daph - ne's

and here, groups of  $3/8$  breaking up the normal flow of the  $2/4$  and  $4/4$  metre:

**Ex. 25***(Gibbons: Fantasia for 3 strings)*
**Ex. 26***(Gibbons: Fantasia for 3 strings)*

An interesting instance of simultaneous  $3/4$  and  $4/4$  groups going on in the right and left hand can be found in the Allemande of Bach's *French Suite* in E:



**Ex. 27**

In European music the superimposition of 2/4 units in 3/4 time is far more common. Here are a few well known instances by various composers:

**Ex. 28**

(Mozart: String Trio Eb, Menuetto I)

**Ex. 29**

(Beethoven: 4th Symphony, Scherzo)

**Ex. 30**

(Brahms: String Quartet A minor, Finale)

In the following example, from the third movement of Bach's Concerto for Two Violins, the 2/4 grouping in the accompaniment goes on for a considerable time against the 3/4 of the solo violins:

**Ex. 31**

1st Solo Vln.

Orch.

Johann Strauss was very fond of this device and used it a great deal in his waltzes. Here are two well known instances:

**Ex. 32**

(G'schichten aus dem Wiener Wald)

**Ex. 33**

The effect of these 2/4 groups rubbing against the "m-tcha-tcha, m-tcha-tcha" waltz accompaniment is, *mutatis mutandis*, very similar to that caused by the superimposition of 3/4 cycles against the "m-tcha, m-tcha" accompaniment in modern dance music.

The fact that superimposed cycles are usually *shorter* than the basic metre (2/4 in 3/4 time, 3/4 in 4/4 time) sheds a very interesting light on the constructional function of such cross-rhythms. In European music it is not the mere physical joy of counter-accentuating against the basic beat in order to achieve a rhythmical stimulus, which creates the polyrhythmic cycles; the use of this device has a certain function in the constructional scheme of motivic and formal development. In most cases, as can be observed, such superimposed cycles derive from a *shortening* or *condensation* of the original motif.

The constructional value of this device in classical composition is obvious; its effect is a heightening of rhythmic tension. By compressing the phrase and bringing the accents nearer than expected the listener is given the feeling of going ahead, of working up to a climax,<sup>6</sup> in other words, of a rhythmical "crescendo". The following example from Mozart's C Major Quartet illustrates the point clearly; the original 3/4 phrase:

**Ex. 34**

is in the course of its development shortened and condensed into a 2/4 motif.

<sup>6</sup> The German word *Steigerung* more or less covers this phenomenon.



**Ex. 35**

No one can help feeling the urgency, the increase of tension which accompanies this passage. Condensations of this kind can be seen in many works of the classical composers. Brahms was very fond of this device and used it a great deal for motivic development.

**Ex. 36** (String Quartet Bb, Op. 67, 3rd movt)

**Ex. 37** (Piano Trio C min., Op. 101, 1st movt)

In Example 36 the condensation of the motif is achieved by the overlapping of the last note of one cycle with the first note of the next. In Example 37 the suspended chord at the beginning of the phrase is eliminated and the motif condensed into a 3/16 cycle.

In Jazz, too, the derivation of such shortened patterns forming cross-rhythms with the fundamental beat can be seen in some cases, *e.g.*

**Ex. 38**

"CLAP YOUR HANDS"

Here again, the condensation of the motif is achieved by eliminating the crotchet rest similar to the Mozart quartet (Examples 34 and 35).

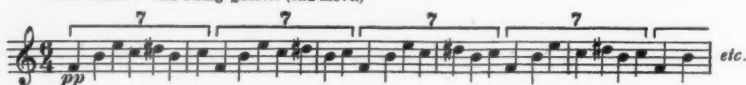
The reverse case, which is much rarer, namely, the super-imposition of *longer* cycles than the basic metre, has exactly the opposite effect on the listener. Whilst the shortening of the phrases brings about an increase in rhythmic tension, in this case the fact that the accents are placed more widely apart than normally expected, gives us the feeling of vagueness, of "dissolution". Here are two characteristic instances, in both cases a cycle of 7 being superimposed over a fundamental metre of 6.

**Ex. 39**

Richard Strauss: "TILL EULENSPIEGEL"

**Ex. 40**

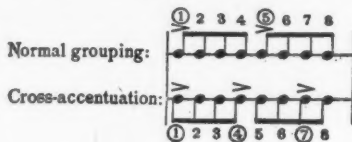
Béla Bartók: 2nd String Quartet (2nd movt.)



In Jazz the 3 against 4 principle penetrates even deeper into the rhythmical structure of the bar. Not only can the basic units of counting (crotchets) be grouped together in threes, but the bar is split up into smaller fragments (quavers) and cycles of 3 quavers are used similarly against a background of 4/4. The following example illustrates the case in its simplest form:



This is a very important and fundamental formula of Jazz rhythm. As can be seen, it breaks up the bar into 3+3+2 quavers instead of the usual 4+4. (In this respect it is a diminished form of the two-bar group shown in Example 17.) In other words, instead of emphasizing the first and fifth quaver in the bar, as is normally done, the first, fourth and seventh quavers are emphasized, thus forming 3 asymmetrical groups.



(To be continued)

## *Recording Desiderata*

BY

H. A. HARTLEY

It is a curious but well-known fact that professionals and well-developed amateurs are generally useless as critics of electrically or mechanically reproduced music. It is generally supposed that their concern with the artistic presentation of a composition outweighs their interest in the technical problems associated with that presentation, and that, subconsciously accepting the fact that all reproduction must be imperfect, they will listen with pleasure to a well-conducted but foully reproduced work. They are more interested in form than in colour.

Such an attitude cannot be seriously criticized by the "electro-acoustician" so long as the vast proportion of music-making machinery readily available distorts so badly as to be offensive to the ears of one who is just as interested in colour as in form. The present standard of reproduction of canned music has resulted from the "free play of private enterprise", wherein the manufacturers of the equipment concerned have naturally concentrated on producing that which can most easily be sold. They are not unaware that their equipment does distort and that three quarters of the records in their catalogues are but travesties of the original performances. Nevertheless, it is not dishonest to sell such records or equipment. Anyone going into a gramophone shop is given the opportunity of hearing and approving or rejecting the records he proposes to buy and pay for. He hears them on an instrument which is probably no worse and may be much better than his own gramophone. In most cases the customer is quite happy with his purchases, and he who subsequently states that the gramophone in the shop was so bad that it did not reveal the utter beastliness of what has been bought is in such a very small minority that the manufacturer, and the shopkeeper, while sympathizing, feel that their first duty is to the balance sheet. It is the indiscriminating masses that pay the dividends.

Before considering recording desiderata we must decide what it is we really want; for if records were suddenly improved out of all recognition it is probable that the improvement would not be noticeable on most of the gramophones now in the possession of the public. It follows, therefore, that these instruments can be disregarded as irrelevant to the discussion while we direct our attention to gramophones which can deal faithfully with the music recorded on the discs.

We must first reject *all* acoustic gramophones. Let it be said at once that the sounds which issue from the large non-metallic horn of a highly specialized acoustic machine are decidedly pleasanter than the noise made by the average radiogram, but the latter is not a very high standard to set. The acoustic machine, no matter how carefully designed, fails on several counts.

1. Its sound output is limited. The air column in the horn is set in motion by the movement of the diaphragm of the sound-box. This diaphragm is actuated by a

pivote arm dwhich carries the needle at its lower end. The needle is moved by the groove on the record, and it is that groove which provides all the power for the sound output. To get reasonable playing time the pitch of the spiral groove is made small, and this necessarily severely limits the amplitude of needle movement, and the sound output.

2. It has an inherent and incurable bass cut-off. Modern records are electrically recorded, and this permits of controlled modification of the sound track on the record. The pitch of the groove is too small to allow the lower frequencies to be reproduced at their full amplitude, for if they were the separating wall between adjacent grooves would be broken down. An examination of the grooves on the lower frequency constant frequency records will at once demonstrate the impossibility of accommodating the bass notes at their normal amplitude on standard records. The normal bass attenuation on records is 6 dB. per octave for all frequencies from about 250 cycles downwards. The acoustic gramophone cannot re-instate this attenuation.

3. It has an inherent and incurable treble cut-off. It is agreed that the "top" one gets from a specialized acoustic machine is better and more extended than the cheap electrical gramophone, but there is no real top in an acoustic because of the comparative ponderosity of the moving parts.

4. It is destructive of records. The stiffness of the sound-box diaphragm restricts the freedom of movement of the needle point. If steel needles are used the walls of the groove are gradually broken down. If fibre needles are used the groove is also worn by abrasion caused by the dust particles in the groove becoming embedded in the soft material of the needle. (It might be pointed out, in passing, that it has been demonstrated beyond all possible doubt that, with a properly designed pick-up, records are worn perhaps four times as rapidly with fibre needles as with steel needles or jewels.) Acoustic sound-boxes have all the bad features of ill-designed pick-ups.

5. It has a number of mechanical resonances which are incurable and inevitably distort the reproduction. The mechanical system of an acoustic gramophone is quite complex and each part has its own peculiar resonant frequency. These resonances introduce spurious components into the total sound output, and are easily perceived by a trained ear.

The electrical reproducer need not have any faults comparable with the foregoing. The sound output can be as great or as small as desired and can be infinitely varied between the limits desired without distortion. Perfect compensation for the bass attenuation in every record can be easily and perfectly achieved. A properly designed lightweight pick-up, preferably with a jewelled stylus, imposes negligible wear on the records; and the very simple mechanical system needed to support the pick-up on the record can be "tamed" much more easily than the complicated picking-up mechanism of an acoustic machine.

Unfortunately, the average gramophone is so full of faults that it has created a good deal of prejudice in the minds of the more sensitive type of musical listeners, who do not seem to understand that as much (and more) care in design is needed in an electrical machine as in an acoustic. There are more things that can be designed, or made, wrongly, and the greater output sometimes merely emphasizes the mistakes that have been made. The average electrical reproducer is, technically, no better than the mass-produced portable gramophone, simply because, the average purchaser not being critical, such equipment is easy to make and easy to sell because it is cheap.

In considering what we want and ought to have on records, it is necessary, therefore, to keep our minds on the fact that when we have got our ideal records we must be prepared to reproduce what is on them by a properly

designed electrical reproducer, one which will give a musical performance of a very high order. It is not proposed to describe such an instrument here, but readers interested in the technical considerations underlying a suitable design may be referred to an article by the writer in *The Wireless World* for July and August, 1944, under the heading "Aesthetics of Sound Reproduction". It will suffice to state here that the essential requirements are:

1. An overall level audio-frequency response, from needle to speaker output, ranging from about 32 to 10,000 cycles per second, with a total harmonic distortion content of less than 5 per cent.
2. Provision of means for controlling or modifying this frequency response to cope with the peculiarities of certain records.
3. An audio-frequency power output of at least 12 to 15 watts, feeding a speaker of reasonably good sensitivity, that is, having an electro-acoustic efficiency of at least 5 per cent.
4. A pick-up of very light weight with little or no restriction of needle movement, and preferably having a very small jewelled stylus.
5. A vacuum cleaner to get the dust out of the record groove and turntable velvet; in default of which, a brush and velvet pad must be used *every* time.
6. Careful experiments designed to determine the furnishing and layout of the listening room and position of speaker which gives the best average sound distribution. When success in this has been achieved the result is surprisingly stereophonic.

We are now in a better position to discuss recording desiderata, and it will help to clear the ground if we discuss some of the faults in existing records. Mr. Geoffrey Sharp has mentioned several of these in an earlier article ("The Gramophone", *M.R.*, Vol. II, No. 2). The outstanding feature of present-day records is the badness of American recordings, badness, that is, from the technical point of view. They are deficient in bass, have peaky and distorted treble and lack "attack", this being attributable to a deficient reproduction of the higher harmonics of strings, brass and percussion. It is generally supposed that these faults are due to the deliberately included design defects of American radio-gramophones, which appear to have over accentuated bass and severe top cut-off. The top cut-off is a legacy from the crowded ether of the U.S.A., for a wide frequency response cannot pleasantly go hand in hand with a broadcasting layout of several hundred stations. The booming bass is, apparently, the taste of the American public. The recording engineers seem to have tried to counteract these design faults by attenuating the bass more than the agreed standard, and injecting enough middle-top to force something through the amplifier and speaker. But whatever the explanation, American records on a properly designed electrical gramophone can be assumed guilty of having no musical value unless proved innocent. The writer has not yet heard an innocent one.

Acoustic recordings have not, of course, any value except as museum specimens, being full of distortion and surface noise. As an aside it might be pointed out that everyone realizes the nature of the advance made when acoustic recording gave way to electrical recording, yet there are still many gramophone enthusiasts who cannot see the obvious absurdity of trying to reproduce electrical recording with acoustic machines. Early electrical recordings are also of little value, merely serving to demonstrate the first steps

in a new technique, but when one reviews the history of electrical recording up to the present day, and considers the nature of some of our recent magnificent English records, one matter seems to stand out very prominently.

Some orchestras and conductors are almost always safe to buy, which, apparently, is due to their having a microphone sense or technique. Boult, Sargent, Barbirolli, Harty, Beecham, have rarely produced an unpleasing record. Experience may have taught them how to place their orchestras, but experience also seems to have taught them that a somewhat different mode of conducting is required for recording or broadcasting, as compared with that usual in a concert hall. Admittedly, all this would go for nothing if the recording engineers were incompetent or had the wrong kind of equipment (as must have been noticed by everyone in the case of some of the B.B.C. recorded programmes).

So our first recording desideratum emerges: the possession of microphone technique by a conductor and his orchestra, by small ensembles, and by individual artists. Alternatively, the recording engineers should be supported by a recording director who is competent to give the performers the necessary guidance and instruction. Probably such an executive already functions, but he should be sufficient of a musician to be able to handle recalcitrant artists successfully and with a firm hand. He would naturally be responsible also for the proper arrangement of the acoustic properties of the recording studio, or for the modification of the acoustics of an outside hall or theatre to suit the work being done.

Setting the stage and getting a perfect performance on to the wax master is comparatively simple. There is no reason why this should not be done every time, and it must be said that English records issued during the last two or three years prove that it not only can be done but is done in the majority of cases. Particularly when one considers how wretched the average radiogram is in performance, one can only be grateful to the recording engineers for taking so much trouble over details which, in the ordinary course of events, will never be appreciated by the people who buy the records. And let it be said, also, that the technicians are by no means complacent with what has so far been achieved. They know they can do better and only await the opportunity.

Our next requirement is not so simple. Given our perfect recording on wax, we want perfect reproduction of that in our own homes. Here a whole mass of economic factors militate against us. The most obvious defect we wish to get rid of is surface noise. The best of the 1939 records were very good from this point of view, and it is a matter for profound regret that the inferior materials available to-day have reintroduced a most distressing noise background to our music. This can be eliminated by cutting out the higher frequencies when reproducing, but as this also cuts out all the life from the music it is a counsel of despair. The writer has found in his own case, and in the case of his friends who listen to his instrument, that it is better to leave the noise there, and get all that is on the record, for after a while one seems able to push the surface noise into the background and concentrate on the music.



Careful wiping of the records to remove as much dust as possible will help to reduce the surface noise, but it cannot be got rid of in the present state of affairs because it is due to the presence of an abrasive agent in the material of the record. This abrasive has not been included just because the record manufacturers are naturally cussed, but because they know the public expects a reasonable life from each record. The vast majority of reproducing machines being either acoustic or badly designed electrical devices a record which wasn't "tough" would break down after a few playings. Furthermore, as the dimensions of the needle point are very critical, it is better to make the record hard and abrasive so as to wear the needle, than allow the needle to wear the record. Needles can be changed cheaply, but records are expensive.

Surface noise is almost non-existent if the abrasive is left out. Such records have been demonstrated by Dr. Dutton of the Gramophone Co., at the Institution of Electrical Engineers, but it must be very clearly understood that any other than a very carefully designed electrical gramophone would destroy such records in a very short time. The pick-up must be very light indeed, the needle very small, and not subject to restraint of movement. With such records and such an instrument, wide-range reproduction without noticeable surface noise becomes a matter of course.

Our next desideratum, therefore, which is absence of surface noise, cannot be supplied unless the gramophones on which suitable records will be played are of a different type from those in general use. The recording companies could obviously sell such records with the proviso that they could accept no responsibility for their life unless played on suitable machines, and "suitable machines" would have to comply with some specification to be drawn up by a competent authority. "Suitable machines" could also be made and sold, but they would not be very cheap, and it would take some time for an appreciable number to get into regular use. Until an appreciable number were in use, the sale of these records would be very small, and they would probably not be a commercial proposition. The writer does not here propose to suggest a way out of the *impasse*, but *impasse* there is, on this point, and on the next to be considered—playing time.

There can be no doubt that changing records is an infernal nuisance. The invention of automatic record changers is no solution of the problem, for the pauses between changes are sufficiently long to spoil the continuity of a lengthy composition, and one has to turn over the pile of records at the halfway point. What is worse: those types of record changers already in existence are unsuitable for the delicate type of pick-up already described as essential for the best results. The writer favours two turntables and one pick-up, using automatic couplings, and swinging the pick-up from one record to the other at the critical moment. With practice the change can be effected in two seconds. Better still, of course, is to have two turntables, two pick-ups, and a fader, but still there will be a break halfway through, for automatic couplings are sold in this format:

I	2	3	4	5
10	9	8	7	6

The cure would appear to be in having two copies of the 5-6 record, but unfortunately the shops will not sell a single record from an automatic-coupled set except for replacement purposes, when the broken pieces of the old record have to be produced as proof of the need.

There are several ways of achieving longer playing time with records which superficially resemble those in use at the present time. For example, the records could be made of larger diameter. This, however, introduces tracking errors. It is already rather a tight fit to get the needle track sufficiently accurately at the inner and outer end of the groove of a twelve-inch record; if larger records were used the supporting arm for the pick-up would have to be longer and stiffer and heavier, thus militating against the use of a delicate lightweight pick-up. The use of a counterbalance is not the cure, as we are concerned not only with the needle pressure on the record, but the mass of the pivoted system.

Alternatively, the pitch of the groove could be reduced. This is a much more promising solution, but it involves reducing the width of the groove and the amplitude of maximum excursion of the recording stylus, with consequent further attenuation of the bass. As has already been pointed out, this introduces no difficulties at all where electrical reproducers are concerned, but records of this type would be unsaleable for use with acoustic gramophones, for they would sound very thin indeed. Furthermore the comparatively lightly inscribed groove would not be sufficiently robust for use with an acoustic soundbox; and, of course, it must be assumed that fine pitch records would be played with very small needles which would not be very suitable for use with acoustic machines. So, therefore, as in the case of "noiseless" records, the introduction of long-playing discs is dependent on the existence of suitable electrical gramophones.

We can avoid the whole of this problem by considering a method which would be completely out of the question with existing gramophones, acoustic or electric—sound on film. Reproduction from a sound track on film can be of a very high order, as was demonstrated at the première of Walt Disney's *Fantasia* in the U.S.A. The sound track was so good that it was even noticeably better on the indifferent equipment in our own movie theatres. We must not take the distorted music we hear in our kinemas as typical of well-processed sound film reproduction, and it is probable that sound on film and sound on discs can both give a frequency spectrum up to about 12,000 cycles per second without appreciable harmonic distortion. The writer, having heard the best of both, tends to prefer sound on disc, but that may be personal prejudice only. Granted the practicability of both systems, has sound on film any advantages over the type of recording usually available to gramophone users?

One almost automatically thinks that the lengthy strip, which can be coiled up so neatly into a reel, will give a playing time adequate for the performance of a complete symphony without a break. The writer cannot claim to be intimately conversant with either the technique or economics of sound film production, but the following snags occur to him. First, there must be a definite minimum speed at which the film passes the sound head. The old

silent movies called for sixteen frames per second through the projector, but with the introduction of the sound film this was increased to twenty-four. Admittedly, twenty-four frames per second does give a better optical result, but it also gives a longer sound track per second. The limit of definition of the track on the film is related to the size of grain of the emulsion, and if a slow projection speed is used, then individual characteristics of the record might be smaller than individual grains. This, of course, would result in distorted reproduction; and so we may not be unduly mistaken if we suppose that the film in the gramophone should pass the sound-head at about the same speed as that called for in the theatre projector. Conveniently sized reels for home use would, therefore, have a playing time of about ten minutes. If there is a "go-and-return" track, which could easily be accommodated in a film half-an-inch wide, the playing time becomes twenty minutes. This seems disappointingly short, and it may be that film experts could offer us a playing time of an hour and still retain reproduction distortionless up to, say, 10,000 cycles per second.

A second snag is the apparent cost. So far as the writer's knowledge extends, it is probable that processed positive film would cost at least a penny a foot, and this suggests that the equivalent of a 10-side symphony would work out at something like £8. Obviously, if mass-produced sound films ever came on the market, very great economies in recording and production could be achieved, but such considerations are, at the present time, purely hypothetical.

The third snag is life. A worn film would be very noisy during the reproducing period, and it is not too pessimistic to assume that a film would have a shorter life than a disc record, thus resulting in a still higher cost per performance.

As side issues, we must remember that all the musical works in which we are interested would have to be re-recorded complete. Play-backs from existing masters to create film masters would not be good enough, and as some of the performers on our best-loved records are no longer available, the new library of recorded music would be very different from what we have now. Also, as has been pointed out, we should need entirely new gramophones. There would be no technical difficulty whatever in providing electrical gramophones which would take disc and film records alternatively; the pick-up is replaced by the sound-head, but the rest of the equipment will serve equally well for either system.

So we come to the end of what has necessarily been a very sketchy discussion of recording desiderata. It is not within the power of any one writer to be able to think of all the desirable features that should be incorporated in the perfect gramophone record. The obvious ones have been mentioned: wide frequency response to avoid losing the characteristic sounds of the various musical instruments and the human voice; freedom from harmonic distortion to permit of that wide frequency response being listened to with comfort and pleasure; absence of surface noise, which is a constant reminder that the

reproduction is "mechanical"; and long playing time to remove the bugbear of interruptions in the continuity.

Technicians can meet all these requirements, but they will insist on the scrapping of existing gramophones, both electrical and acoustic. If we think in terms of disc recordings, the design and supply of electrical gramophones which could deal adequately with the improved type of records mentioned would also permit of a very much greater measure of enjoyment from those records made during the past ten years. But is there a demand from the public? The present writer has had much experience of designing, making, and selling such gramophones. In the early days, the demand was infinitesimal, but it has been steadily rising for some years, and to-day, given the slightest encouragement, he would be quite prepared to make and supply such machines again. Even so, this would be a very small undertaking, and of little interest to the large manufacturers who are only really interested in the mass supply of requirements of a mass market. Unfortunately for the purist, there is no demand at all from the general public for better records or better gramophones. If the purist in his frustration demands that the public taste be improved, then we may well ask who is going to shoulder the responsibility of doing it? The large manufacturer will certainly do no such thing, for he only concerns himself with creating a demand when his productive machinery is not fully occupied with production. In the ordinary course of events, sales of records of dance and light music vastly outweigh the sales of so-called "classical" music; yet while the sale of good records has grown very considerably during the war, a matter which must please everyone interested in the more serious side of life, it must be remembered that these records are played on machines that already exist, and it is going to take a lot of hard work to persuade more than a small proportion of the gramophone public to scrap their existing equipment and buy better machines *as part of a long term policy*. And it must be a long term policy, for the possession of a finely designed electrical gramophone so refines one's musical palate that record buying from existing lists becomes more difficult and discriminative than ever. There are many works which the writer is very anxious to have in his record library, which have been recorded, but which he would not accept as a gift. These recordings would be quite acceptable by the standards implied in listening to the average gramophone, but such standards are quite useless when one is concerned with really good reproduction.

Where, then, do we go from here? The answer must lie in the field of politics. Every one who is anxious to get better records and better recording must agitate to the limit of his power to this end. Let him do all he can to disillusion the ordinary non-musical citizen that the dreadful sounds he, the ordinary non-musical citizen, is creating in his room are music, but rather an insult to the fine arts. In short the music lover must create a wide-spread demand for something better. Then, under our existing political and economic structure, the big record making companies will supply the needs of this demand, but only then. Of course, the ordinary processes of social and industrial evolution will gradually bring about improvements, as the improvement of

electrical recording finally made acoustic recording obsolete. That, however, did not call for any change in the gramophones held by the public; the cost of changing the recording system was originally borne by the manufacturers and spread over the whole record output by very easy payments indeed. The next change is going to hit each individual gramophone owner very hard indeed, for this time it is the customer who must scrap his "plant". The chances of having our recording desiderata supplied are, therefore, directly dependent on the willingness of the public to buy new and better equipment capable of dealing with the recent better records. The technical experts are willing; doubtless, the recording companies are willing; but is the public willing?

#### TAPE vs. DISK

Estimating that only 15 per cent. of the potential market for records is equipped with phonograph turntables, RCA Victor Division of the Radio Corporation of America predicted, in a news letter to its dealers and distributors, an enormous increase in record sales when production of phonograph instruments for civilians is resumed.

Discussing so-called "revolutionary" new methods of recording such as strips of film, or tape, or a wire, RCA Victor reported that its research laboratories are investigating the possibilities of these recording techniques for the benefit of the various fields in which RCA operates, but concludes that the present type of recording for home records is regarded as the most practical.

"The Disk method provides music of exceptionally high quality at low costs, in such simple form that a child can make full use of it", RCA Victor reports. "Moreover, it offers the advantage of preselection. We may hear any portion of a symphony at will, or all of it. The perfection of automatic record-changing mechanisms of low cost within recent years has made it possible to pre-select a symphony or musical program that can be played for more than an hour. In our opinion, nothing now contemplated in the laboratories or in use commercially at present shows any signs of offering such flexibility, tonal fidelity and simplicity, at low cost, as do the conventional disk and phonograph."

Extract from *The Review of Scientific Instruments* (published monthly by the American Institute of Physics). Volume 15, Number 12, December, 1944, page 359.

[Readers, no doubt, will take this last paragraph with more than a pinch of salt, but the extract seemed worth printing as an appendix to Mr. Hartley's article. (Ed.)]

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#### REVIEWERS

E. M.	—	ELIZABETH MACKENZIE
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E. H. M.	—	ERNST H. MEYER
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A. E. F. D.	—	A. E. F. DICKINSON
E. H. W. M.	—	E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN



## Book Reviews

*Proceedings of the Musical Association, 1943-1944.* Pp. 89. (Whitehead & Miller.) 21s. [to non-members]

Of the five papers, with discussions appended, that make up this year's record, Mr. Llewelyn Lloyd's is noteworthy. His application of Bacon's *Idola Fori* to "Musical Theory" is brilliant and shrewd, and his conclusion that the basis of musical theory must be "the faithful observation of the practice of the great masters" is reached after interesting analyses of, in particular, the theories of Alexander Ellis and Yasser. The paper is a fellow to one in the 1940 *Proceedings*, and its discussion-coda on piano intonations, brought up sharp by Captain Broadwood's practical remark on tuning, has the charm of abstruse argument in a Platonic dialogue.

Mr. T. B. Lawrence, on music and words, is diverting and to the point, though he does not mention that "idear" is the pronunciation that stands (I hope someone will say "stood") in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. He does well to advert to the intruding *r* from which listeners-in suffer daily. His wisdom is shown by the admission that one cannot meddle with church pronunciations that have become traditional.

Sir Sydney Nicholson offers a historical survey on the choirboy and his place in English music, stressing the important names that began as choristers, the fact that there is no harm in a boy going on singing during the change of voice (a point taken up in discussion) and Handel's choruses, with particular reference to the Tenbury MS. of *The Messiah*.

Next, but some little while after, come the vanguard, Miss Sands and Mr. Edwin Evans, the former in a long essay on eighteenth century English teachers of singing, for which the works of Tosi, Geminiani, Corri and Jousse have been laid under contribution. On the subject of bravura passages, Miss Sands writes: "Handel and his like (*sic*) wrote that sort of thing just to make life more difficult"; this is, in fact, scissors-and-paste work rather than criticism. As for Mr. Evans, entitling his paper "The Thirty Years' War" (1900-1930), and dealing in the main with the revolutions associated with Debussy, Schönberg, Stravinsky and Berg (*Wozzeck*), he reaches this enlivening conclusion: "The experience of those years warrants the belief that from all experimentation by competent artists who know what they are about" (query: *what else is a competent artist?*) "there always remains something of value which remains even if their own works lapse into oblivion." What an encouragement to a young composer! And to be told "What matters if generations hence the very name of Debussy is remembered only in dictionaries, or his works considered museum pieces"? Such a pronouncement argues a complete absence of musical faith. *Comoedia finita est*.

### BEETHOVEN, OR BOTTOM?

*Beethoven, Life of a Conqueror.* By Emil Ludwig; translated from the German by George Stewart McManus. Pp. 271. (Hutchinson's International Authors, Ltd.) 21s.

This is Erles' vein, a part to tear a cat in, to make all split. In an age of dictators your journalistic biographer interprets his matter dictatorially, and Mr. Ludwig has risen to the occasion in starkest film fashion. The facts of Beethoven's heroic but grotesquely tortured life-struggle are accessible to everyone through Thayer's researches, and even now Grove's famous *Dictionary* article needs little supplementing. It is open to anyone, if he prefers, to see his Beethoven *sub specie* op. 55 and op. 67, but there is no longer any excuse (quite apart from Tovey's guidance) for, e.g. a *cherchez la femme* aberration with regard to the *Les Adieux* sonata such as twice figures on these 261 pages of rhodomontade and anecdotage. Indeed, it is safe to say that a person who cites *Tristan und Isolde* when criticizing the stuff of that musical monument of manly friendship has, as a historian no less than a musicologist, got his Beethoven hopelessly wrong. I should be glad to leave things at that, and the statement that the verso of the title-page, with the rising composer's words to Zmeskall, "Strength is the moral code of those who



rise above their fellow-men, and it is also mine", followed by the first four bars of the finale of the C minor symphony, gives the whole scope of what shows precious few glimmerings of understanding of, I will not say a creative artist, but a human being. But look here! Of the letter to the "Immortal Beloved" we read, "In this letter are many pathetic but no tender words; it is impersonal in a deeper sense. A young girl, however, would rather have her lover recall a nod of her head, a look, a garment." No tender words! "Only a few words to-day, and those in pencil—your pencil." But then, you see, "the matter is not important" (p. 73), and all we learn from this document is "how he addressed women in general".

Slips, such as calling Mozart's C minor piano Concerto a symphony (p. 67), one is prepared for, but not for such a gross insensitiveness as this, which comes again and again. We are told that the cello sonatas (op. 5) are of no particular value (p. 77), that the story of *Fidelio* is more dramatic than the opera itself (p. 137), that Marcelline is a dainty little doll and Beethoven's "serious nature" prevented any sympathy for her, whereas he wrote three different versions of her aria, that the slow movement of the second *Rasoumoffsky* is quite on a par with that of the Ninth Symphony, and the finale of the third recalls the moods of *Carmen* (p. 126), that the Archduke Rudolph was scarcely to be called a friend, rather His Royal Highness, and Beethoven handled him with diplomacy (p. 101), and that Beethoven (surely Wagner must be meant) could be called a financial wizard (p. 90). We read (p. 88) of "his last years, when, his powers ebbing" (facsimile of the *Cavatina* in op. 130 at p. 209), "his greatest successes past", etc., even (p. 164) that he was "pathetically deficient in what people call a business sense", and (p. 189) how he "demolished" Clementi (whose works he recommends) with a phrase. And so on, and so on, till we get to "this deaf old dictator" (p. 223). What is one to make of all this? One more sentence will show, a summary of all the slow movements the "conqueror" wrote: "Beethoven's adagios are dedicated to women: gestures of courtship, now humble, now demanding; but fulfilment he seldom portrays" (p. 67). There is a point in journalistic biography where the crown of sheer asininity descends, as in Bottom's case, almost as an author's right; and here you see it descending.

But no book in the world is probably utterly bad, and the writer of this one makes three points which, if obvious, are not false:

- (1) that Beethoven's deafness imposed on him only humiliation in dealing with people, no loss of confidence in his own musicianship;
- (2) the corollary to this, that he grew to take refuge in his music, to win lovers after he was dead, since he felt himself cheated of love;
- (3) that his nephew had a sense of honour.

E. H. W. M.

*Philosophy in a New Key.* By Susanne K. Langer. Pp. xiv + 313. (Harvard University Press: Milford.) 1942. 20s.

If modulation in music is movement into a position from which existing circumstances can be viewed afresh, the title of Mrs. Langer's book is well chosen. Her dissertation makes no claim to present a new philosophy, but is intended to emphasize certain aspects of modern thinking which she calls its "new key" and to show "how the main themes of our thought tend to be transposed into it". The peculiar nature of the change she underlines makes it desirable for her field of reference to be wide and she is not entirely to blame that the ground plan of her *Weltanschauung* is not as satisfactory as the generative idea would seem to deserve. It is necessary for the philosopher to see where he has been and where he is going before he can explain where he is. In her anxiety to relate her hypothesis to all the manifestations of modern thought, a desire which is obvious from an almost over-exuberant bibliography, Mrs. Langer actually sacrifices more than if she had limited its application to art or physics and examined more completely the sources of the ideas which she attempts to analyse at full flood. If her method seems difficult to reconcile to her realization that her very theory is the result of the historical attitude, that in an age less sensitive to the pattern of ideas it would have

been inconceivable, it is because she believes in the absolute originality of the modern view of the world: "The springs of European thought have run dry . . . new conceptual forms are crowding them out, but are themselves in the mythical phase, the 'implicit' stage of symbolic formulation." Such a view forces her to explain the new conception of the world almost entirely in terms of itself.

After an explanation of the nature of symbolism on anthropological-psychological grounds, the author, from a point somewhere between Clive Bell and the Gestalt-psychologists, divides the forms of thought into "discursive" and "presentational" symbolism, with particular reference to the nature of the arts. Mathematics, logic and poetry are included in the former, the visual arts share the qualities of both and music is held to be the most complete form of the "presentational" symbol. Later, certainly, poetry is admitted to be essentially presentational, but it would seem that, in any case, the distinction between the two categories is not entirely logical. Langer defines symbolism as "the vehicle for the conception of objects". Surely at this level all thought is presentational, instantaneous, whether it be the Quantum Theory or *Ariadne*, and it is only in the extension of the term to cover the communication of the conception that Langer's distinction can be made; and then only in the realm of intention. As far as it is necessary for the idea to approximate to a condition of actuality, so far will its symbolism appear discursive. Obviously, since the artist aspires to a condition of reality, his symbolism should appear presentational, although, because his work must be limited by space and time, this state cannot be realized. Therefore it would seem that, whereas for the logician, perhaps, the statement of the original presentational symbol in terms of a discursive symbolism is sufficient and indeed desirable, for the artist who desires first that the idea shall be, rather than that it shall be intelligible, the idea must be expressed in terms of itself; and that is form.

It is strange how, recognizing that "art gives form to something that is simply there . . . and to this mission it is either adequate or inadequate", Langer still falls into the fallacious dualism of form and content, even so far as to say of music that "articulation is its life but not assertion; expressiveness but not expression". She realizes that in visual art the constituents of the object are not translatable, line for line, into the elements of the picture. It would have been so easy to have pressed this statement to its logical conclusion, to have said, in simple terms, that the picture is a symbol of the idea of the object. Since this is a condition of all art, it would have enabled her to accept the views of such critics as Hanslick, whose "effectual repudiation of the form-and-content dichotomy" would seem to be more in keeping with her general explanation of symbolism than her own rather vague remarks on the "meaning" of music.

One regrets that Mrs. Langer limited her consideration of "symbolic transformation" to contemporary theory and did not take into account the practice of such artists as James Joyce and Picasso, whose work is related to and in some sense responsible for her own attitude. They would have been more rewarding, perhaps, than some of the material on which her dissertation is based. However, if she denies herself such confirmation, the conclusions she reaches by other means are wide enough for us to include it. E. M.

*When Soft Voices Die.* A Musical Biography by Helen Henschel. (John Westhouse (Publishers), Ltd.) 1944. 10s. 6d.

*When Soft Voices Die* is a book about George and Lillian Henschel, their friends and relations.

George Henschel, besides being a renowned singer, was a composer and conductor. In 1881, when he was in America, he was invited to form an orchestra in Boston; he subsequently founded the Boston Symphony Orchestra, known to-day as one of the foremost orchestras the world over. This he did in spite of the antagonism of the press to the idea of a permanent orchestra. The public, however, proved the press to be wrong, for they turned up in thousands to performances and rehearsals alike.

The foundation of the Boston Symphony Orchestra was just a part of Henschel's musical work, though possibly one of the most important and far-reaching things that he

did for music generally. He remained in Boston only four years as conductor, then continued his career as a singer.

The most interesting section of the book is undoubtedly the chapter containing a number of Brahms recollections, perhaps because this is the one section where musical ideas come under discussion and where we learn something of how music is created. The rest of the book is mainly made up of humorous anecdotes, of small interest to anyone outside the Henschel family circle.

To-day there is a great demand for books on music. The general public who are the main supporters of orchestras founded by such men as George Henschel, want to learn both about music and about the personalities who present it to them. Here was an opportunity for Miss Henschel to give us something of real value from the great musical experiences of her family. Instead she has given us a book on the Henschels at home.

The paper used for the publication of *When Soft Voices Die* could have been put to better use, as musical scores and text books are now largely unobtainable; for we regret to say that there is but little musical or literary merit in the book. E. H. M.

*Sumer is icumen in*, a revision. By Manfred F. Bukofzer. Pp. 40. (University of California Publications in Music.) 1944.

The first edition of Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* professed to limit its scope to the period 1450-1889, but none the less it contained an article by W. S. Rockstro on *Sumer is icumen in*, as well as many more on aspects of early mediaeval music by the same author. Rockstro had been led towards mediaeval studies by his private religious inclinations; he had studied plainsong from 1863 onwards and became a Roman Catholic in 1876. In those days musical palaeography was practically unknown. Rockstro naturally accepted for *Sumer is icumen in* the date suggested by Sir Frederick Madden in 1862, a date based not on musical handwriting, but on general handwriting of English MSS. This date, *circa* 1240, has never been seriously challenged until quite recently, and what we may call the Rockstro legend has been perpetuated in any number of popular books on musical history. For the third edition of Grove the article was revised by Dom Anselm Hughes, who sums up its importance in six points: (1) it is the oldest known canon, (2) the oldest known harmonized music frequently performed and enjoyed by singers and listeners to-day, (3) the oldest known six-part composition, (4) one of the oldest compositions in the major mode, (5) the oldest known specimen of ground bass, (6) the oldest known MS. in which both secular and sacred words are written to the same music. "This last point", says Hughes, "gives us some idea of the estimation in which it was held in its own day".

Rockstro very prettily suggested that the melody was originally a folksong, and that some monk of Reading Abbey discovered accidentally that it would go in canon, and would be improved by the addition of a very primitive ground bass. The jaunty trochaic rhythm of the tune seemed to confirm this idea, and during the present century the general interest that has developed first in native folk-song, then in native music of all kinds, and finally the desire to popularize the oldest available examples of native music, have combined to make *Sumer is icumen in* something of a national symbol, along with the *Agin-court Song*, *Rule Britannia* and *God Save the King*. Another important point which Hughes omits to mention is that literary scholars have claimed the original words as the first English poem to be set to polyphonic music.

It is now admitted by everyone that Rockstro's theories are superseded. Dr. Bukofzer shows that Wooldridge did not make very much advance on them. Wooldridge, it should be noted, was not really a musician at all; he was a painter by normal occupation, and was attracted towards mediaeval music by an interest in illuminated manuscripts. But Wooldridge at least won some respect among German musicologists from the fact that he made no attempt whatever to correlate mediaeval music with the music that most people know and enjoy. He regarded it entirely as a dead language, one which had its grammar and syntax, its prosody too, but no pronunciation or aesthetic value. In this he was like

Dr. Edward Moore, of Oxford, who was considered one of the most learned Dante scholars of his time, but was completely unable to talk Italian or understand it when spoken.

Dr. Bukofzer begins by pointing out that the leaf on which *Sumer is icumen in* is written was not necessarily written at Reading, or by the writer of the calendar in which the name of John of Fornsete occurs. And Fornsete cannot have written the calendar, since it commemorates his own death. There is therefore no reason for attributing the *rota* to him as composer, nor even to Reading Abbey. William Chappell discovered in the same volume a poem ascribed to Walter Mapes (d. 1208), satirizing the notaries of the Papal curia for accepting bribes, and interpreted one line—

Et forme subiciet canones rotunde

as a pun on the meaning of *canon* and *round*, from which he deduced that canons and rounds must have been things familiar to everybody in England at that date or earlier. But Thomas Wright (1839) had long before explained that the words mean "and will subject the canons (*i.e.* laws) to the round form" (*i.e.* to coin). The passage, as Dr. Bukofzer says, cannot possibly refer in any way to music, for the word *canon* was not used in its musical sense until the Renaissance; in mediaeval times the word for canon was *fuga*, and musically *canon* meant the rule or direction by which the "canon" was to be solved. There is no getting over the fact that if our *rota* is dated 1240 it must be nearly a century older than any known pieces of music that even approximately resemble it. Hitherto English writers have been delighted to believe that English genius created this miracle; but the evidence has been very inadequate. The chief things to be learned from a palaeographical study of the MS. are that it was originally written in what Dr. Bukofzer calls "English mensural notation", a style of notation hitherto completely ignored by all English musicologists, but nevertheless peculiar to England towards the end of the 13th century. At a later date—probably not many years later, since the perpetrator was the original scribe himself, the notation was altered, and a set of Latin words added beneath the English. A reference to the excellent facsimile in Grove (Third Edition, Vol. V, frontispiece) will make it obvious to anyone that the Latin words were a later addition, since the notes are spaced to fit the English ones and the Latin has to be extended to fit the notes. This disposes of a suggestion once made by Dom Anselm Hughes that the Latin words were probably the original text. Dr. Bukofzer shows that the first version of the music was in duple rhythm, which the scribe later converted into triple rhythm, the rhythm in which the *rota* is now always sung. The reason for this was that in those days triple rhythm was considered sacred and duple secular. This goes completely against our modern feeling, which associates duple rhythm with Hymns Ancient and Modern, and triple rhythm with *Girls and boys, come out to play*. The scribe, in fact, was not a modernist, but a reactionary, the rhythm of two beats being younger than that of three. Dr. Bukofzer prints the *rota* as it was in its first version, and we can now see why the scribe not merely changed the time-values of the notes but in some cases altered the actual notes; he wanted to destroy the essentially secular character of the music with its conspicuous imitations of the cuckoo's call, F-D, F-D. It is curious that he made no alteration whatever in the *pes* or ground bass, and left that with English words alone.

Thanks to the researches of the late Prof. Ludwig of Göttingen, Mme Yvonne Rokseth of Paris, Prof. Handschin of Basle and others, there is now available an enormous corpus of early mediaeval music from various sources, and all this has been to a large extent collated, so that a given composition, or part of it, can be traced perhaps in several MSS. and their versions compared. No other copy of *Sumer is icumen in* has so far been traced, but the comparison of handwritings, notations and musical styles leads Dr. Bukofzer to the conclusion that the famous *rota*, so far from having been written in 1240, cannot possibly be earlier than 1280 and most probably dates from about 1310. A curious thing is that Riemann printed a version of the *rota* as far back as 1905 in duple time, although he himself maintained that the original notation had no mensural significance. Riemann was firmly convinced that most mediaeval music was in duple time, but his theories have

by now been largely discarded. The Harleian MS. in which the *rota* occurs contains also an index of musical works which mentions "W. de Winc(hester)" as the composer. The MS. of the works themselves has disappeared, but Ludwig identified a large number of the works in other MSS. These show clearly that the lost Winchester MS. must have dated from the early 14th century, so that it is only reasonable to suppose that the *rota* belongs to the same period. Hughes in Grove's *Dictionary* says that the Winchester index contains the motet *Ave gloriosa mater* written out in the same MS. as the *rota*; but Dr. Bukofzer says it does not occur in the index at all. His publication draws attention to several errors and omissions in the writings of Hughes.

As regards Hughes' "six points", Dr. Bukofzer still admits the first; *Sumer is icumen in* is the earliest known example of canon as a form in its own right. The second point may also stand, though no German musicologist would consider that a point of any importance. The *rota* is also (3) the oldest known six-part composition. As regards the major mode (4) Dr. Bukofzer says nothing; he possibly would regard this point as entirely irrelevant, as he well might point six too. But the *rota* is not the first polyphonic setting of English words; that honour now goes to *Foweles in the frith*. Nor is it the first composition on a ground; there are works on a ground in the Montpellier MS. of 1280. But Dr. Bukofzer is evidently anxious not to hurt our patriotic feelings too much, and he consoles us by saying that the composer showed a skill unequalled by any of his contemporaries, and that "the revision of the date actually enhances the qualities that make *Sumer is icumen in* one of the outstanding compositions of the 14th century".

The English reader who pursues Dr. Bukofzer's arguments in detail may need to be warned that he will sometimes have to translate back into German certain locutions that the author has roughly Englished from the modern technical jargon of German musicology. Germans always call the *rota* the *Sommerkanon*, and Dr. Bukofzer calls it the Summer-canon, a convenient term, I admit, but unusual in England. Other non-English usages are *text for words*, *notate for write* (German *notieren* = write in musical notes), *fascicle for quire* (this is permissible), *measure for bar* (this is standard American usage, I regret to say), *ostinato for ground* or *ground bass*, *resonant* and *resonance* for *sonorous* and *sonority*, *crab-canon* (*Krebskanon*) for *canon cancrizans*. The word *parody* in its technical sense may not be familiar to all English readers; it does not mean anything satirical, comical or contemptuous, as in ordinary English, but merely any new set of words, in any language, substituted for the original. Thus the Latin words of the *rota*, *Perspice christicola*, are not a translation but (technically) a *parody*. I cannot suggest any other English equivalent for this term, which is so often required as to be practically indispensable. Dr. Bukofzer makes a curious use of the words *central* and *peripheral*, curious at least to us who are not "Central Europeans"; *central* seems to apply to the situation of Wolfenbüttel, Paris, Florence and Madrid, *peripheral* to England, though I should have thought that Madrid and perhaps even Florence were no less "peripheral" than London or Winchester. His most misleading usage is *voice leading*, which does not mean "the voice which is leading", as it should, but *Stimmenleitung*, the direction of the vocal or melodic line. *Direction* (and not *leading*) is in fact the proper translation of *Leitung* in almost any sense, except when it means plumbing or electric wiring, although it is no doubt the common use of *Leitung* in German in connection with gas, water or electricity that has led German musicologists to apply it to singing as well.

*Literary Sources of Secular Music in Italy.* (ca. 1500.) By Walter H. Rubsamen. Pp. 82. (University of California Publications in Music.) 1943. \$1.25.

There are still plenty of writers on music who continue to propagate the legend that all music before the days of Peri and Monteverdi was completely dominated by the Church, and although it is perhaps hopeless to expect that such people will ever read modern contributions to musical scholarship, we must at any rate give a cordial welcome to all those who are quietly pursuing research and establishing historical truth.

Mr. Rubsamen's paper is evidently the fruit of enormous industry and diligence; there is hardly a page out of its eighty-two without copious bibliographical foot-notes. It



tells us very little that is new to any researcher conversant with the usual Continental sources, but it does at least summarize pretty well all that is known on the subject and summarize it in English. The foot-notes will be a useful guide to any reader who wishes to investigate the problem more in detail. The author restricts himself to a comparatively small field; he treats of the *frottola* of the early 16th century and ends his study at the point where the *frottola* just begins to show signs of developing into the madrigal. For readers who are not specialists on this period the most useful section will be the eleven musical examples printed complete in score in modern notation; they are well chosen and exhibit very suitably the gradual transition from what Mr. Rubsamen would call "plebeian" simplicity to "aristocratic" elaboration. The bulk of the paper is devoted to criticism of the words only, but there are a few observations on the music and we could only wish there had been more. We should indeed have welcomed a larger book on the subject, addressed to a wider circle of readers and giving us a more comprehensive picture of the whole musical life of the early Renaissance in Italy on its secular side.

The *frottola* begins as a setting of "pseudo-plebeian" verse, what we might well describe as sham folk-song. The customers who bought the collections issued by Petrucci between 1504 and 1514 were certainly not proletarians; music-printing in those days must have been an expensive undertaking, and the songs of this type were intended for the amusement of a highly cultivated aristocracy such as is described by Castiglione. But if we read Castiglione as well as the music of his time we shall soon see that this "highly cultivated" society was not really much more "cultivated" than the society of Victorian London. It was refined, almost to exaggeration, in manners, and it set a certain value on the arts as adornments of life, but its taste in music was of the simplest. This was not the period of Gesualdo Prince of Venosa and Luca Marenzio; it was not even the period of Arcadelt and Costanzo Festa; and it is hardly an exaggeration to suggest that the *frottola* of Marco Cara or even of Bartolomeo Tromboncino are on much the same level as the part-songs of Sullivan and Barnby, or the drawing-room songs of Virginia Gabriel and J. L. Molloy. Mr. Rubsamen admits that their poetry reached no high average standard; the best that can be said of the poets was that they were feeble imitators of Petrarch, as one might say that the Victorian song-writers were feeble imitators of Tennyson. During the great period of the Italian madrigal the singers of madrigals in Italy were almost exclusively professionals, whereas the English madrigal singers were mainly amateurs, although some of the English madrigals are as difficult of execution as any of the Italian ones. On the other hand we have to admit with shame that our aristocracy in early Tudor times had comparatively little in the way of secular music to correspond with the *frottola* and the *canti carnascialeschi* of Florence, in spite of all the encouragement given to music by Henry VIII.

Mr. Rubsamen evidently considers the *canti carnascialeschi* outside his province; he just alludes to them, but he does not even mention in his foot-notes the selection published in Paris by Paul-Marie-Masson. It is surprising too that in describing the various ways in which *frottola* were performed in those days he omits the amusing and very characteristic accounts given by Teofilo Folengo (Merlinus Coccaius). But he fully realizes, I think, the implications of the original printed part-books and the contemporary MSS.; the music was written out in four single parts because that was the most convenient practical form for all practicable varieties of performance. It did not necessarily imply four voices, either solo or chorus, unaccompanied, and it did not exclude a single voice with a lute and no more if that was all that was available. Out of all the extant lute-tablatures the large majority of items are transcriptions of madrigals, and I see no reason why even an amateur lutenist should not have been able to vamp a simple accompaniment on his instrument from a bass part in staff notation.

We must all be grateful for the publication of *frottola* in modern print, but the chances of hearing them sung are small, and it must be admitted that they are hardly suitable for concert performance to-day. Their music, taken by itself, is generally rather dull; indeed there are many madrigals of which the same could be said. Words and music are inseparable, even if the literary value of the words is as indifferent as the musical value



of the music. Together they make something, at any rate for those who can really enjoy the words. When we come to the days of Marenzio, it is needless to say that an understanding of Petrarch's poems is indispensable to an understanding of the music. The four-part *frottolo* are historically interesting as showing how audiences of those days were thrilled by the sonority of common chords in four parts after the bleak three-part counterpoint of the previous age, and it is also curious to observe the long-continued practice of achieving an ordinary dominant cadence by making the tenor descend one degree to the tonic while the bass goes up an octave to supply an interior fifth. But if we want to enjoy the lighter music of the Italian Renaissance we shall find more fun in the three-part *villanelle* and so forth with their insistence on unashamed consecutive fifths. It is a pity that none of these seem to be easily available for modern performance.

E. J. D.

#### MUCH LEARNING

*Listening to Music.* By F. J. Horwood. Pp. xvi + 203. (Dent.) 1939. 6s.

"When one comes to think of it, what a lot of musical knowledge there is that does not help the listener—or at least helps him only very indirectly. . . . He finds a book called *The Elements of Music*, he masters it, and finds he has got a grasp not of the elements of music at all, but merely of the details of musical notation. . . . He buys a text-book on harmony, and finds himself able to string chords together. . . . But his listening ability is little increased. The fact is that all this time our poor friend is laboriously acquiring the mere beginnings of the stock-in-trade of a composer (which he will never be) and neglecting to acquire the necessary stock-in-trade of an intelligent listener (which he wishes to be)."

It must be admitted that what Scholes said in 1919 (in his *Listener's Guide*) is pertinent comment on the book under review. The writer poses the problem that, in the modern world of noise outside and radio banalities inside the home, symphonic music "is sometimes provocative of slumber", and his main solution is to provide a store of information about musical material and its creators: the sentences and other "language" features; the rudiments and refinements of musical notation and theory, from the stave of five parallel lines to the definition of intervals and ornaments; "strict" and "free" counterpoint (the former being described as evolved in the sixteenth century "from a system which consisted of the writing of melodies in five different rhythmic species against a *canto fermo*, which seems to have been written for the most part in whole notes, and is now sometimes called colloquially 'a fat row of semi-breves'"); harmony from triad to augmented sixth and modulation; the common structures from binary to symphony and opera (where "in the case of the Wagnerian music-dramas the music plays just as important a part as the words"); instruments, solo and orchestral, transposing and non-transposing, with drawings of the violin, etc.; the biographical background (over thirty composers); the evolution of the art from mediaeval to modernist; the creative methods of composers, with photographs of manuscripts; and, finally, some very brief analyses of eleven symphonies from Haydn to Tchaikovsky (4, 5 and 6), with considerable thematic quotation.

These are the kinds of facts which Dr. Horwood has found it expedient to assemble in book form as a result of his experience as a lecturer to appreciation classes at the Conservatory and University at Toronto. Which of them are calculated to "develop a faculty of intelligent listening in this age of radio-consciousness"—as he, no less than Scholes, purposes to do? The chapters on form and history are concise and useful, though they need more illustration to be effective and whisk the reader rather jauntily from one sketch to the next. There are some sweeping generalizations from classical procedure ("concert-overtures were written in sonata form" and the like), and the listener is taken no further into modern music than Debussy's "impressionism". The symphonic analyses are a fair introduction. The course of the various movements will often seem not nearly so simple to the unwary as the plain formulae suggest. Also, these formulae leave a consistent impression that the exposition of sonata form is based on a first theme, bridge-passage and second theme, and no more: rough treatment for the opening of the *Eroica* or the finale of the *Jupiter*. And why does Dr. Horwood select only symphonies, all in a common mould of classical or cyclic type, the latter incidentally not distinguished very clearly in the case of Franck and not distinguished at all for Tchaikovsky No. 5?

This leaves a vast amount of sorting out, and even of bare selection, to the reader's discretion—concertos, stage overtures and symphonic variations in general.

The opening chapters on notation, harmony and counterpoint will add little intelligence to the hearing of musical works. For example of fugue (*i.e.* the form which Bach "established") Dr. Horwood takes the G minor for organ—the instrument where contrapuntal entries are least audible—and, having dealt with the exposition, he lapses disappointingly into generalities on fugal developments in general. The chapters on instruments are on the dull side. There is no reference to the characteristic appearances of the instruments in current orchestral or chamber-music to help the reader to identify them, and a full-score quotation (such as Scholes' thrilling presentation of the opening bars of Elgar No. 2) would have been of great assistance in indicating how the groups of the various instruments described combine to make not twenty-nine sounds but a single complex thought. The biographical sketches are a neat series of paragraphs.

A book of limited value, variable scholarship and heterogeneous knowledge. It may be a useful reply to supplementary questions on a course already given, but as a book in itself it fills no particular need at the moment, and in no important respect supersedes the established guides by Scholes, W. W. Johnson and others. Since these appeared, orchestral music in its grand variety has become common experience, and it cannot be said that Dr. Horwood has made the most of this improved situation. A. E. F. D.

*Leslie Heward, 1897-1943.* A memorial volume edited by Eric Blom. Pp. 89. (Dent.) 1944. 8s. 6d.

Like all books of its kind, this one is a collection of bits and pieces. The best of the tributes are very illuminating and the volume is one which all who knew Heward will want to possess. Those for whom the subject was no more than a name will be less interested, though they may begin to realize how great a loss was theirs. G. N. S.

*The B.B.C.* Pp. 23. Published by the Arts Advisory Committee of the Communist Party (16, King Street, W.C.2). 9d.

The charter of the B.B.C., granted by H.M. Government in 1927 and renewed in 1937 for ten years, expires in December, 1946, and as long ago as August, 1943, the Minister of Information gave warning to the House of Commons and asked Members to press for a complete examination of broadcasting in after-war years. A number of surveys and slighter articles have been written on the subject, in addition to a good deal of lobbying and intriguing behind the scenes; and of these surveys the most notable are the two issued privately by the Political Research Centre in October and November, 1943, and the one under review by the Communist Party. The astonishing thing is that they agree in their main conclusions, though they arrive there by different routes; so do extremes meet. The wonder of broadcasting is far less its scientific achievement than its rapid growth from an adventurous toy into an enormous world-force. Of the political functions of broadcasting, of its recent war-time past or its social influence in the future, this is no place for discussion, nor has the writer either the space or the capacity to thresh the subject out. The fact remains that the only decision which can be taken on broadcasting in the United Kingdom has to be made by Parliament; and that is as true for musicians as for all other citizens. The vote of each musician's representative in the House is thus charged with an enormous musical meaning, and it is therefore the duty of every one of us to consider deeply and long for himself what effect on the future of music this purely political vote will have, if it chooses a continuation of the B.B.C.'s monopoly under the Postmaster-General or, on the other hand, decides in favour of sponsored programmes. "Very many people, who have no idea of the issues involved, tend at present to believe that [commercial broadcasting] would give greater freedom of speech and more stimulating and entertaining programmes. The purpose of this pamphlet", writes the Communists' pamphleteer, "is to try and prove that this attitude is tragically wrong". The attempt is fully successful, the case is overwhelmingly proved, and for one writer at least there can be no shadow of doubt that musical and political disaster

lie ahead of "sponsored" programmes. Indeed, it is with no little surprise that one writer finds himself in total agreement with the Communist Party for the first time, albeit he does not swallow whole all the implications of the arguments leading up to that admirable conclusion. Everyone who loves music will, it is certain, come to the same conclusion. No recapitulation of the arguments is possible here, but certain considerations may be mentioned as an inducement (it is hoped) to study the whole question fully in the light of these arguments. First, it is imperative to differentiate between the principle of commercially sponsored radio and the actual organization of the B.B.C. Numberless times one has heard criticisms of individual programmes and departments of the Corporation transformed into vague visions of the rosy future of freedom from bureaucracy in broadcasting. Can anyone doubt, even his strongest political opponent and most bitter enemy, that Lord Reith, by his high idealism at the beginning of broadcasting, saved this country from nothing short of jungle-rule on the artistic side? Whether Reith's outlook and temperament were right for coping with the appalling problems of management and organization that daily arose in broadcasting's unexpectedly rapid growth is another matter; but it must be remembered that the Corporation is yet young, hardly adolescent and still inflicted with growing pains, and the re-organization of the interior of the B.B.C. is not a labour of Hercules, whereas all Olympus assembled in godly might could not restore the charter when once broadcasting had been thrown to the wolves. It is clear that the whole system of governors and higher management needs altering, and these pamphlets make excellent suggestions to that end, including a regular system of interchange between Dominion and Home-Country officials. The financial set-up will have to be altered, and no doubt the whole lay-out of wave-lengths and programme services will automatically be revised when peace comes. But two other points must be borne in mind. First, that conditions are such as only to permit a small number of satisfactory wave-lengths, the use of which is therefore precious. Secondly, the re-birth of television is imminent, and must be already thought of as an essential part of broadcasting service. Only those who have lived under commercial broadcasting can be fully aware of the horrors it perpetrates in the name of "freedom from control". Actually, as the Communists point out by apt quotation from an American writer, the advertising sponsors' aim is "to close the listener's mind, to make him inflexible in thought and action, to teach him to 'act on their authority'"; and what could be more authoritarian than that? But if commercial radio with all its occasional high spots produces, as it indubitably does, a low general standard chosen by the minimum intelligences, what would be the future of sponsored television? It is too hideous to contemplate. Undoubtedly we shall put the clock back if we allow the advertisers to rule our radio. The admirable musical work done here and throughout the Empire by the B.B.C., its permanent orchestra and varied musical enterprises, all will be thrown away, and with it all prospect of achieving after the war permanence of that love of music in England which war has proved to be powerful in every man's breast. The musicians must turn politicians for once, not in the art, but in their desperate need to preserve their art from the ravages of the business salesmen.

H. J. F.

## Reviews of Music

Heathcote Statham. *Rhapsody on a Ground* for organ. (Novello.) 3s.

An extremely clean, fresh work, which, though in E minor and the variation form, does not recall at any point the *Finale* of Brahms' fourth Symphony. This, in itself, is a triumph, and is enhanced by a refusal to go into E major save for some closes. The variety in rhythm is ingenious and never donnish, nor are the instrument's lungs strained in the *maestoso* section. A real crag scaled by an English composer.

E. H. W. M.

Martin Shaw. *The Redeemer*. An oratorio for Lent. (Joseph Williams.) Vocal score. 6s.

The plan is elaborate, the music itself not beyond the reach of a parish church choir. Part 1 is "the Conflict of good and evil", part 2 "The Agony and the Betrayal", part 3 "The Crucifixion" with a climax of "Praise to the Holiest in the Height". The words are compiled and selected by Joan Cobbold from the scriptures and from many sources as diverse as an anonymous 15th century poet, Queen Elizabeth, and Christina Rossetti. For one reader, at least, the work lacks not religious but musical conviction. It is made music, utility music. It lacks both ecstasy and tranquillity. The style is an extraordinary mixture of idioms. On one page one hears the voice of Gerontius, on another that of the English Hymnal. The reiterated common chords that persist all through the work are like a parody of early Vaughan Williams, but they are used with repeated unexpectedness until they become a new kind of chromatic parallelism, a chromaticism that is emphasized by constant triads. Thoughts of Bach constantly rise in the mind. Yet there is a good deal of pure background music which is far more suitable for the theatre than the church, and more than once that kind of repeated figuration which is the stock-in-trade of the writer of film music. The effect of the whole will be more dramatic than musical. The ordinary old-fashioned lenten oratorios (they live on with a wonderful vitality in their faded old age) are not notable for the exaltation of their style or for their clean lines, contrapuntal skill, mystical beauty, or, indeed, any other musical characteristic. *The Redeemer* represents a newer and better age of Church music, in which Dr. Martin Shaw has been one of the foremost and healthiest of pioneer musicians. Only we are not convinced that this is Dr. Shaw at his best. H. J. F.

Dear Mr. Editor,

You have done me the honour to ask me to write for you a review of Dr. John Ireland's *Fantasy Sonata* for clarinet and piano (Boosey & Hawkes, 7s. 6d.). I don't think I can follow your behest in this case, because though I could describe the piece in simple words, I do not find it easy to be judicial about it. Every style in music has an appeal for one and not for another. Beethoven's idiom rings a bell in some who find Bach's language dry; Mozart's polite phrases hum sympathetically on the heart-strings of men and women to whose ears Delius makes no sound of a summons. And moods change; one day's meat is another day's—I will not say poison—but less appetising fare. Your printer's devil has called my pen at an unpropitious moment, for I find little in this new work of Ireland's that appeals to me just now. I am sure the fault is mine. There is nothing different in it from twenty other successful and much-loved pieces by the same composer. It is equal in standard (if not much better) with the Piano Concerto and the Trios. Its rhapsodic style will sound very well, and its swift emotional changes will give it a romantic appeal. There is the usual close piano texture of familiar harmonies with notes added to thicken up the sound; the soloist soars, like a very grown-up lark, but he does not seem to be "going places". Do I hear *These things shall be affecting Amberley Wild Brooks*? Am I wrong to miss the epigrammatic style of the Sonatina? Do I miss quite that English passion that induced *Summer Schemes* and the Hardy songs to leave the ground? Passion there is, but it is a past passion, and the idiom stays, too, in the memory. This is all a matter of temperament, and I repeat, I am not in the mood. Another would pour out ecstatic phrases. For those you could willingly accept responsibility as Editor of THE MUSIC REVIEW. For my disgruntlements I ask no responsibility, and therefore write to you as an unwilling correspondent, not a delighted contributor.

Yours very truly,

HUBERT J. FOSS.

[Feeling that an occasional unconventional review lends variety to our pages, and that Mr. Foss has succeeded admirably in indicating the content of the music while at the same time defining his own attitude, we print his letter *verbatim*. It may serve as a timely reminder that rigid objectivity of criticism is seldom possible and even more rarely achieved. (ED.)]

Purcell. *Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven.* (Anthem for S.S.A.T.T.B.) Edited by H. S. Middleton. (Novello.) 11d.

*Lord, how long wilt Thou be angry?* (Anthem for S.S.A.T.B.) Edited by J. A. Westrup. (Novello.) 7d.

Three Sacred Canons. (No. 1 for T.T.B.B., with alternative for S.S.A.A.; Nos. 2 and 3 for S.A.T.B.) Edited by Gerald M. Cooper. (Novello.) 5d.

*Suite for String Orchestra from Abdelazer; or, The Moor's Revenge.* Edited by Gerald M. Cooper and Marjorie Hayward. (Novello.) Score 5s.; parts 8d.

*Six Suites for Harpsichord or Pianoforte.* Edited by Gerald M. Cooper. (Novello.) 3s.

These are the most recent additions to the Purcell Society's "Popular Edition of Selected Works": two fine, if not outstandingly great, anthems, three beautiful and beautifully vigorous canons, a fresh load dug from that apparently inexhaustible mine, Purcell's theatre music, and the first six of the Harpsichord Suites. In this case the reviewer's business is not to hand out bouquets or diplomas to Purcell—though the temptation to point to the howling false relation in the penultimate bar of the penultimate page of "Lord, how long wilt Thou be angry?" is irresistible—but to appraise the work of his editors. So far as the non-specialist eye can judge, they have done the purely musical part of their work admirably; their names are a guarantee of textual accuracy and their tempo, dynamic, bowing and other markings are judicious and wisely limited to the absolute minimum needed to keep the modern performer on the path of Purcell's style. (Presumably it is considered unnecessary in a "popular edition" to indicate which markings are the composer's own, though Mr. Cooper does so in his preface to the harpsichord suites.) And it is useful to have the ornaments in the keyboard pieces translated into modern notation instead of leaving them wrapped in seventeenth-century mystery as Barclay Squire did.

But mention of Barclay Squire's edition of the complete original keyboard works of Purcell turns one's attention to the general policy of the Purcell Society's editorial committee and obliges one to ask "What is its policy?" The idea of rescuing selected works from the obscurity and relative inaccessibility of the big Purcell Society Edition is admirable, but why does the committee waste its labours and its presumably restricted paper on works like the Harpsichord Suites, which have been rescued in popular form already? Barclay Squire's four volumes, admirably printed by Chester, are inexpensive and still in print; they include the doubtfully authentic *Toccata* and, despite the editor's preface, some transcriptions—possibly not Purcell's own—from the theatre music (e.g. the hornpipe in Vol. III, which is from *The Old Bachelor*), and the interpretation of the "graces" has to be studied from the editor's preface. But with the exception of that last point, Barclay Squire's is a "popular" as well as a scholarly edition, and Mr. Cooper's volume of six suites, good as it is, was needed less urgently than a good deal of other Purcell. And why only six of the eight suites? In his preface Mr. Cooper points out that the last movements of the seventh and eighth suites are "arrangements of theatre airs and such like" which may be by Purcell himself but "may just as well be hack-work, added by the publisher to complete the suites and help the sale of the volume by the addition of a few popular tunes. The first six suites we must take as entirely Purcell's. . .". Either Mr. Cooper has not expressed himself clearly or he does not doubt the authenticity of the seventh and eighth suites minus their last movements; if their authenticity is not in serious doubt, why not publish them with the first six?

While the Harpsichord Suites have a useful preface on the circumstances of their original publication, editorial treatment and manner of performance, the other publications are not even dated—although the general editor, Mr. Cooper, has elsewhere published an admirable chronological list of Purcell's works. The score of the *Abdelazer* suite even withholds the information that *Abdelazer* was a tragedy by Mrs. Aphra Behn. These are small points, but their omission lessens the value of otherwise good work and heightens the impression of haphazard planning given by the list of published and



projected works; the serial number of the first anthem mentioned here is 6, the Harpsichord Suites are No. 7; No. 8 (like No. 5) has not yet appeared, but will be "Three Overtures for Trumpets, Drums and Strings"; the Canons are No. 9, and the *Abdelazer* suite is No. 10. If the editorial committee are working to any plan, one would like to know what it is.

G. A.

Béla Bartók. *Mikrokosmos Suite*. Arranged for orchestra by Tibor Serly. Full score. (Boosey & Hawkes.) \$5.00.

The score consists of seven numbers selected from the piano pieces of identical title (Nos. 139, 137, 117, 142, 102, 151 and 153), preceded by No. 3 of Bartók's contribution to the "Tombeau" of Paderewski. The justification of the latter's inclusion in this score seems to be the orchestrator's desire to save that concise little piece from the oblivion which usually befalls similar memorial collections; or, perhaps, Mr. Serly intended it as an easy introduction to the general style of the work. It well illustrates the application of modern treatment—which is not so "modern" after all—to a comparatively simple "folky" tune.

Mr. Serly, once a pupil of Kodály's and an excellent viola-player, can claim special knowledge of the contemporary Hungarian orchestral style.

The Paderewski piece is somewhat thickly scored. The deep, rich register of the strings tends to blur the rather polyphonic character of the opening bars. However, an interesting use is made of the harp chords alternating with string-pizzicati. One of the last bars is repeated in order to make more elbow-room for an orchestral climax. It is a pity that Mr. Serly has not included the other two Bartók pieces from the Paderewski album in his score. No. 2 (*Jack in the Box*) is a brilliant character-sketch on the lines of Ravel's rendering of "Samuel Goldenberg et Schmuyle" in *Tableaux d'une exposition*. This delightful piece is enlarged by repeating some bars mainly in order to display in the orchestra the implicit contrasts of the original. No. 3 (*Unisono*) is one of the best of the score, especially if one considers the fact that the original, as written for the piano, is rather unpretentious; a melody in unison with cadential phrases. In the orchestral version the contrasts inherent in it are mainly assigned to wood-wind alternating with strings. All the instruments used are employed in their best-sounding register; the strings, at the opening, in their deep, sonorous compass. At the end, all unite in an effective coda. No. 4 (*Bourrée*) is notable for its satiated tone-character and the use of ingenious little devices, i.e. imitation on trumpet before fig. 20 in the score, sustained harmonics at the end. No. 5 (*Moto perpetuo*; *From the Diary of a Fly*), in its original form, is characteristic of Bartók, i.e. the clashing, fractious, superimposed second-intervals. Bartók employed this technique comprehensively in his third, and particularly in his fourth string quartets. There is, however, no work of serious dimensions for the piano employing this technique; only scattered—yet no less masterly—compositions. This, No. 5 in the score, No. 142 in the original collection, presents considerable difficulties for translation to the full orchestra. Mr. Serly deserves all credit for producing an extremely ingenious instrumentation. The larger canvas, which the orchestral writing demands, necessitated the repetition of several phrases and sentences of the original, yet it is full of witty, picturesque touches, delicate and well-balanced effects, and is remarkable for the judicious use of harp and wood-wind. I consider No. 6 the least satisfactory in the score. This study in overtones presents almost unsurmountable difficulties for the orchestrator. On the piano the application of this technique—employed also by Schönberg in his early piano-compositions—consists of pressing down silently certain keys of the instrument and striking some other notes or playing a melodic phrase. While the former notes or chords are kept pressed down a dematerialized, ethereal sound is produced, similar in character to harmonics on strings. The orchestration of the passage for *pp* flutes and *ppp* tremolo violins will not yield the desired effect. Even if the instruments are played ever so softly that wafting, gossamer quality of evanescent sound will certainly be missing. Perhaps harmonics on strings or the employment of harp and/or celesta would have served better. Nos. 7 and 8 of the score are both based on Bulgarian rhythms; here Mr. Serly stands



firmly on solid ground. The rendering is clear-cut, precise, yet sonorous and full. The sections are well-contrasted in colour; at one point, however (No. 7 at fig. 46), the scoring for string pizzicati and wood-wind staccatos is not a true rendering of the composer's original intentions. No. 7 leads *attacca* to No. 8, which is also the last in the original piano collection. Here we arrive at the climax of the whole work. The scoring has been done with great vigour; the result is a wholesome, extremely fresh piece. At fig. 63 a kind of recapitulation of the opening sentence has been interpolated, this time in G, elevating the tension before the *marcatissimo* passage.

Taken in its entirety, it is an extremely interesting score, full of unexpected, well-balanced effects. The percussion and trumpets are often handled in the approved swing fashion; precise instructions are given to the percussion as to soft rubber or hard metal sticks; copious use is made of the differentiated pizzicati inaugurated by Bartók himself in his later string quartets.

The piece does not make very great demands on the performers and therefore is a doubly welcome addition to the contemporary repertoire of orchestral music. Incidentally, why are Bartók's major orchestral works never performed? J. S. W.

Gustav Mahler. *Andante Pastorale* from Symphony No. 2, arranged by Erwin Stein. Full score. (Boosey & Hawkes.) \$2.50.

For many years Mahler's music has been practically unknown to the general public in this country as well as in the United States. Here is a handy edition, for the time being of one movement only, and against all existing odds it can be safely predicted that this publication will be a success.

The *Andante Pastorale* from the Second Symphony is one of the composer's most friendly and easily comprehensible pieces. There is first a menuetto theme, folksonglike and full of the charm of similar movements by Beethoven and Schubert. A lightfooted spiccato episode in semiquaver triplets forms the second subject. The whole movement is based on the thematic interplay of these two main ideas.

There will be few people insensitive to the graceful elegance, and yet, at the same time, the vitality of this music. We may add that this movement, composed in 1894, represents a typical Mahler, in its combination of popular qualities and individualist tendencies.

We are indebted to the editor, Erwin Stein, for facilitating the performance of this movement by reducing the score to the size of smaller orchestras. The arrangement is, indeed, masterly and entirely in keeping with Mahler's symphonic intentions.

There has been something like a revival of Mahler's music in various countries abroad, chiefly in Soviet Russia, where traces of the Mahler idiom can be found in works by their major composers. In this country, too, Mahler's influence at least on individual musicians has been growing, as a glance at some of Britten's scores will show. While we agree with William McNaught that, as far as the general public is concerned, "the English disregard of Mahler has yielded to a grudging acceptance largely based on curiosity", we are now tempted to think that Mahler's importance may considerably increase in the near future. There are certain qualities which make much of his music appear akin to the needs of our own time. While the mystical note in Mahler has been stressed frequently—Mahler is a contradictory phenomenon—there are also qualities of optimism and a warm humanism in his works. In any case, this composer is passionately sincere in whatever he writes, he is a great master of orchestral treatment, and there is much harmonic and thematic interest in his music. We do not advocate a Mahler "cult"—or, indeed, blind acceptance of the work of any composer. Yet it does seem odd that at least some of Mahler's works, among them Symphonies Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5, the *Songs of a Wandering Minstrel*, the *Songs on the Death of Children* and the *Song of the Earth*, are not much more widely known.

What seems to stand in the way of greater popularity of this music, especially in England, is the large orchestral apparatus necessary for most Mahler performances. This is where the simplified edition of the *Andante Pastorale* comes in so useful. It will help to break down a prejudice.

Johann Sebastian Bach. *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major*. Edited by Henry J. Wood. Full score 5s.; string parts each 8d.; cembalo part (continuo) 1s. 6d. (Boosey & Hawkes.)

The arrangements of the *Brandenburgs* must have been among the last work of the venerable King of the Proms, whose devotion to Bach will be remembered by generations of enthusiasts. No attempt shall be made here to add to the universal praise of the man who brought the great masterpieces of music to the people—Sir Henry's place in British musical history is secure. But we will say that this edition is one of Sir Henry's most successful. It is, on the whole, well-balanced and it is free from the subjectivism—if not romanticism—of some of his earlier Bach arrangements. The basso continuo is edited with restraint.

Bach left no indications as to dynamics in the score. Sir Henry's dynamics will, perhaps, be most open to criticism. He intended to employ, in his own words, "a subtle inflexion and emphasis, giving a human feeling to these immortal phrases". If we take Sir Henry's fortissimos, crescendos, decrescendos, accents and marcato as overstatement rather than literally, we shall achieve something like a correct style. Where there are only the bare notes in the score (as is the case in all the *Brandenburg* originals), the performer, it is true, needs a lead from experts like Sir Henry. Now if Sir Henry endeavoured to interpret Bach—we may be permitted to interpret Sir Henry, in that we advise acceptance of his indications as "general pointers" only. Let us not revel in a Bach *ff* as though we were building up a Tchaikovsky climax. Let us play a crescendo-decrescendo in a single bar in such a way as to make a phrase more understandable, but not to produce that emotionalism, that continuous up and down which some conductors still feel bound to impose on Bach's and Handel's instrumental scores.

In a short preface Wood proclaims a holy "war on dots" (that is to say, the staccato dots for the string instruments which deform so many earlier Bach editions). He claims to have erased no less than 768 dots, in order to achieve dignity and nobility—and were Sir Henry alive to-day, he would find that Bach fans everywhere would rally to his banner. Even so, he leaves a certain number of dots in the score, notably in places for which he suggests piano or pianissimo. Again it seems that players will best keep to portamento-staccato rather than to a spiccato.

A last point: the tempo suggestion for the Finale (dotted crotchet = 84) seems slightly fast. 76 would have been sufficient.

However, the main thing is that there should be *life* in our Bach performances, not mannerism or sterile academicism. Sir Henry's *Brandenburg* edition will go a long way to establish, once and for all, a true interpretation, full of life and vigour. E. H. M.

## Concerts

MANCHESTER: 31 JANUARY

In twenty years of concert going I have noticed that one rarely listens to a programme of music drawn from widely different periods and conceived in grossly diverse styles and leaves the concert hall with the feeling that each item played has been wholly satisfying. It may be that this is not necessarily related to any shortcomings in orchestras and conductors—to any lack of versatility in performance; possibly the whole matter is subjective and the receptive senses are more or less worn down in the clash of stimulus and counter stimulus. Be that so, or not, this Hallé concert purveyed, at least to me, a feeling of deep satisfaction in the performance of works by Haydn, Delius and Richard Strauss.

To begin with, the *London* Symphony was played as Haydn symphonies should be played and rarely are. There was finesse—of course—but also plenty of rude and effective vigour. Haydn's high spirits are *not* intended to be Puckish. The people for whom his work was written were well fed *bons vivants* with their feet as firmly planted on the ground as were his own. His geniality—the geniality of the slow movements—is not that of a benevolent Prospero, but derives from passing the port round a well dressed and well satisfied table, any member of which might belch to his heart's content and be neither heard nor minded during the rich tutti. Thus the flavour of Haydn's good humour should be that of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's, who lived in, and wrote for the same world at the same time. Some of our more fanciful conductors, whose fragile and frothy readings of Haydn (and, let it be said, of Mozart too) have misled concert goers for so long, could learn from this reading of Barbirolli's. For more selfish reasons than that I hope he will make a Haydn recording with the present Hallé orchestra.

Having delighted us with the Sheridan-esque humour of Haydn's music, within the hour conductor and the necessary handful of players gave us the very quintessence of Molière's wit as distilled by Strauss. The six movements of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, with their opportunities for solo virtuosity in almost every department of the orchestra, revealed the Hallé leaders as a fine set of instrumentalists.

R. J. Forbes played the solo part in Delius' piano Concerto. Here was pure poetry—in saying which I have to confess to a deep affection for the work. The actual performance was not without blemish. One knew, at one point, that if Barbirolli asked the orchestra for still more tone, the weaving thread of the piano part would be hidden. He did, and it was. But I am convinced that the great majority of the audience would not notice such as a fault, lost as they were with Barbirolli himself in the imagery the performance conjured.

I have never experienced a more exciting climax to an evening's music than the performance of *Death and Transfiguration* which ended this concert. I can only say that here was inspired conducting and orchestral playing of a kind which must place the Hallé surely in the very front of the world's orchestras. The effect on the audience—which the sociologically inclined might like to know was fifty per cent. working people as far as I could observe—was uncannily direct. It is easy, in this work and works like it, to present an occasional big climax with such force that the performance as a whole is memorable. Just because of that it is *not* easy to give it that concentration which registers bar for bar, phrase for phrase, in the very faces of the audience. It was fascinating to watch, and a revelation to hear.

J. B.

#### PARAY AT THE ALBERT HALL

On 10th February the London Philharmonic Orchestra gave one of the finest performances of Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique* that has been heard in London for several years: almost in a class with Barbirolli's magnificent recent broadcast of the same work. M. Paul Paray's "idea" was no less subtle, though the orchestra's execution at times fell short of what he had hoped to show us. Longer and more assiduous rehearsal would have fused intention with achievement which, even so, showed M. Paray to be a true Berliozian.

There are certain liberties one does not take with the classics; in Beethoven's G major Concerto, Mme Yvonne Lefebure took nearly all of them. After a really good start: taut, expectant and, in fact, definitive, Mme Lefebure's rhythm lost its precision and there were too many audible errors in the piano texture to allow our undivided attention to the content of the work. You cannot really attend to music when you are anticipating mistakes which will probably be made as the work unfolds. Too many were, and through extravagant use of rubato the soloist managed at times to sever the rhythmic bondage between piano and orchestra which M. Paray, with his acute rhythmic sense, tried so hard to maintain.

Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio Espagnol* amounts to little more than a display of virtuosity: this we were given and a good time was had by all.

## HALLÉ CONCERT: 25 MARCH

Right from the start *Le Carnaval Romain* should conjure up an air of expectancy, and mid-way through our imaginations should be fully charged and ready to follow its headlong career to its brilliant end. No orchestra can carry off so heavy a season as the present Hallé's without showing occasional signs of weariness, which were unfortunately evident in the first few pages of the overture: but long before the coda Mr. Barbirolli and the orchestra had seized the elusive spirit of Berlioz and the old magic of France's greatest musical genius was plain for all to feel.

Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* (K.364), which followed, is one of the most rewarding of the classics and at the same time one of the most difficult of execution. It requires a first-class orchestra, two first-class soloists who have played the work together so often that the phrasing of the viola has become automatically that of the violin and vice versa, and finally a conductor who can weld these three elements into a homogeneous whole. No praise can be too high for the orchestral contribution to this performance, which Barbirolli handled with the *finesse* born of a true understanding of the composer. The soloists, Laurance Turner and George Alexander, had not the fullness of tone to conquer the intractable acoustics of the King's Hall, Belle Vue: nor was there a full degree of understanding between them as to phrasing—but their performance was a respectable one, and we believe that when greater confidence leads to a fuller tone Mr. Alexander may become one of the really outstanding masters of his instrument.

*L'Apprenti Sorcier* was given the most brilliant performance of the day. No other British orchestra plays with comparable bravado, and it was a pleasure to see musicians so obviously enjoying their work. Keeness may not be all, but it is a welcome change from the blasé indifference or even obstinate intractability of other orchestras we could name.

For some reason the cello share of Schubert's *Unfinished* was weak and unconvincing. What we could hear of their phrasing was good and they appeared to be pulling their weight, but the requisite volume of sound was not there. This criticism applies only to this work and no obvious explanation is apparent.

The waltzes from *Rosenkavalier* and the *Gipsy Baron* overture were played in their true style, with great verve and what our stodgier pundits would call un-English abandon. The orchestra is eloquent of Mr. Barbirolli's and its own hard work. There lies its strength and for this reason it stands as an object lesson to the country.

## HALLÉ CONCERT: 28 MARCH

The first half of this concert consisted of Mendelssohn's *Ruy Blas* overture, Gordon Jacob's brilliant and superficial oboe Concerto and Debussy's three *Nocturnes*. The orchestral playing was of a very high order, while special mention must be made of Evelyn Rothwell's fine achievement in the solo part of the Jacob and of the superb trumpet playing in *Fêtes*. *Sirènes* was largely spoilt by the choir, which sang in amateurish fashion without due regard to correct intonation.

After the interval occurred one of those rare miracles which, before the war, we used to experience two or three times a season: a performance which reflected integrity, hard work and overall musicianship, and achieved the effect of genuine inspiration. Strauss' *Don Quixote* is an exceptionally subtle and complicated score, calling for a superlatively fine cellist, violist and tenor tuba, a conductor who understands and loves every bar of the work and can persuade his orchestra to re-live the Knight's fantastic adventures with him, and finally a body of musicians of sufficient technical attainments to cope with every virtuosity the composer has devised. Such perfection as Barbirolli and the orchestra put before us beggars description—we were shown the essence of Strauss, his sardonic wit, rough humour, pathos, impatience and lust, all these threads being interwoven to produce a very remarkable essay in the pure poetry of sound.

There has been a tendency in recent years to neglect *Quixote*; or to portray it as a sort of opulent cello concerto, sporting a big name in the solo part and hoping the soloist's fame

would camouflage all else and excuse any ham-fisted bungling that might happen in the orchestra. Mr. Barbirolli has applied the proper antidote. He showed that Strauss knew his business when he wrote *Don Quixote*, that it coheres admirably and that it is one of the most ingenious works written in late 19th century style.

It remains to mention the inspired performance given by Haydn Rogerson. His execution was perfect and his style beautifully suited to the character of the work: Casals could have played no better, than which there can be no higher praise. George Alexander more than confirmed the great promise he showed at Belle Vue and the unnamed tenor tuba impressed us most strongly with his great technical proficiency. The orchestra as a whole covered itself with glory and provided one of the outstanding musical events of the last six years. Mr. Barbirolli may well be proud of a grand evening's work.

G. N. S.

## Gramophone Records

*Beethoven : Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor. Op. 37.*

Solomon and the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, c. Sir Adrian Boult.

His Master's Voice DB 6196-99. 24s.

About two years ago José Iturbi recorded this work for Victor with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra: we have yet to hear this set, but accept David Hall's opinion that it in no way sustains comparison with Schnabel's old but magnificent reading (His Master's Voice DB 1940-44). The version now under review is presumably intended to challenge comparison with the Schnabel. On balance it fails.

Technically the recording is of course livelier, profiting from the improvements which have been made in recent years: but it is slightly bass-heavy and therefore less satisfying than the best recordings issued immediately before the outbreak of war. In addition Solomon's manual dexterity is superior to Schnabel's; the passage work is cleaner and on the whole more accurate. Further, Sir Adrian secures precise articulation from the B.B.C. Orchestra and a satisfying fusion of texture between orchestra and soloist.

What more can one ask? A show of enthusiasm which might have acted as the spark to kindle interpretative genius. This performance plods and exemplifies exactly what our romantic novelists mean when they write of lack of inspiration. Here machine-like efficiency is all: there is no gusto, the music fails to soar and seldom even gets off the ground.

The Schnabel remains the musician's choice.

*Elgar : Symphony No. 2 in E flat, Op. 63.\**

The B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, c. Sir Adrian Boult.

His Master's Voice DB 6190-95. 36s.

This, the first great English symphony, has needed re-recording for a number of years; for although there are people who still insist that the composer's own reading (His Master's Voice D 1230-35) is definitive, they will discover if they try these old waxes over again that the music is lost in the surface noise. There is a moral in this which seems too obvious to point.

The recording engineers have made a grand job of this new set, while the performance is sound and respectable without generating the white heat which is latent at some points of the score. Elgar's second Symphony is essentially big stuff in every sense of the phrase, running for some fifty minutes and covering the whole scale of emotions which are expressible in music (a wider range than can be covered by words). Perhaps Sir Adrian has not quite taken full measure of the emotion latent in this score: Englishmen are ever wary of wearing their hearts on their sleeves, one of the many ways in which Elgar showed his exceptional nature. Listeners will see what we mean on side nine, where there is a cataclysm which ought to "raise the roof": here the records just fail, though without

\* Strongly recommended.



having been present at the recording session it is impossible to tell whether musician or engineer is at fault—the passage may have been cut down in intensity out of consideration for the walls of the record grooves. But whatever the cause, our resultant disappointment is just as intense.

We have no other major criticism to make; but listeners may notice a cough at the beginning of side two and an impromptu timpani flourish at the beginning of side five. Further, if we may make a personal suggestion, wouldn't the theme at the end of side ten sound more effective if taken a little slower?

It remains to draw attention to two matters of interest: the oboe quotation from *Die Meistersinger* an inch from the end of side two, and the syncopation half-way through side three reminiscent of the same composer's first Symphony (finale).

Considered as a whole, this Elgar second is a fine achievement. It is not carried off as brilliantly as the *Capriccio Italien* (His Master's Voice DB 3956-57), but ranks with the best of Boult's other recordings such as Vaughan Williams' *Tallis Fantasia*, Bliss' *Music for Strings* and the Schubert "Great" C major Symphony.

*Schubert: Symphony No. 6 in C major.\**

The London Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Sir Thomas Beecham.

His Master's Voice DB 6200-02 and DBS 6203. 21s.

This has too long been the Cinderella of the Schubert symphonies. There are eight now extant, of which Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 6 form one natural group, Nos. 4 and 8 (the minor key symphonies) another, while Nos. 5 and 9 stand each in splendid isolation, unique in any company. No. 7 in E is incomplete and the *Gmunden-Gasteiner* is lost. In this country the *Unfinished* and the "Great C major" are familiar and Nos. 4 and 5 are sometimes included as novelties in otherwise hackneyed programmes, while what we have described as the first group are occasionally broadcast by the B.B.C. from one of their studios but are hardly ever found in the programmes of public concerts.

For years before the war Sir Thomas pioneered the cause of the "Little C major", he and no-one else, and now at last he has recorded it, presumably in the hope that a few more philistines may succumb to its charms or perhaps just because he wanted to. Whatever the avowed reason, it has obviously been a labour of love: you have only to count up the matrix numbers on these seven sides to see something of the amount of time that has been spent on the work, bearing in mind of course that the matrix selected in each case was not necessarily the last to be made.

The work is a little gem and in the last issue (p. 52) we wrote that those who have heard Beecham conduct it will not take kindly to hearing it abused. It has been said that dog does not eat dog, but even so, and with the best will in the world, we must point out that those critics, who are, or at least pretend to be familiar with No. 6 in C, have always found something uncomplimentary to say about it. There is a puritanical streak in English critics as in all species of the English animal; Schubert was no puritan and to English ears his musical *bonhomie* sometimes seems insufficiently serious to take an honoured place in the hierarchy of classical music. Small wonder then if we smell humbug, and we fancy we have a nose for it.

This performance is not what it would have been had the work been recorded before the war. The L.P.O. wood-wind, for example, is not what it was, and this score bristles with opportunities for sleight-of-wind, if we may coin a phrase. But there has been high endeavour and the result is not unrewarding. The best European humour a hundred and thirty years ago cannot have been very different from its counterpart to-day, save perhaps that it is rarer now.

Technically the recording is good, if rather heavy in bass response.

G. N. S.

*Schubert: Symphony No. 8 in B minor.*

The National Symphony Orchestra, c. Fistoulari.

Decca K 1114-6. 12s.

Perhaps no other symphony gets so many all-heart-and-no-head performances as this. Fistoulari gives a reading in which most of the beauties of the work are revealed and the



composer's intentions respected. Only in two places is his judgment at all at fault; the famous second subject in the first movement is played with a degree of deliberation which, temporarily, vitiates the splendid rhythmic vitality he has evoked from the start, whilst in the second movement the tone is occasionally augmented too starkly. The latter defect is the more serious, especially since it accompanies some excellent wood and horn playing, upon which departments the more subtle beauties of the movement depend. Taken on the whole the performance is acceptable, however, and the recording is excellent.

J. B.

*Thomas : Overture, Mignon.*

N.B.C. Orchestra, c. Toscanini.

His Master's Voice DB 6177. 6s.

The old Berlin State Opera record conducted by Leo Blech remains the better (His Master's Voice D 1943). This new version is more brilliant, so much so that the slick, highly polished artificiality of the modern cocktail bar is about all that remains in the memory. The recording of the first side (on which no major climax occurs) is good, but the second steadily deteriorates until we reach the coda where the noise is terrific but not in the least like the sound of the modern symphony orchestra.

*Barber : Adagio for Strings.\**

N.B.C. Orchestra, c. Toscanini.

His Master's Voice DB 6180. 6s.

This movement originally belonged to a String Quartet in B minor. It is warm, lyrical music with a strong sense of direction which leads us to expect great things of Mr. Barber in the future. The performance has been superb and the recording is better than that of the *Mignon* overture—but as with so many of Toscanini's discs it is not good enough.

*Rimsky-Korsakov : Caprice Espagnol, Op. 34.*

Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Sargent.

Columbia DX 1180-1. 8s.

This is very fine from the technical point of view, both musically and electrically; good recording and clean, sprightly playing have achieved one of their rare war-time combinations. There is, however, almost inevitably, a reservation to be made. The last movement, entitled *Fandango Asturiano*, crawls lethargically to its close; contrasted with Paul Paray's spirited performance three months ago we can only describe this as "a poor thing but our own"—speed, drive and bravado are surely essential for this finale in order to build up and sustain our exhilaration to the end.

*Bartók : Roumanian Folk Dances.\**

Yehudi Menuhin and Marcel Gazelle.

His Master's Voice DB 6178. 6s.

This is an arrangement by Szekely of Bartók's familiar dances for piano which have already been recorded by Lili Kraus (Parlophone R 20435). Both these records are first-class in every respect and provide ready-made leading strings for the die-hards among us who claim that Bartók's music is unfathomable.

*Beethoven : Trio No. 4 in B flat, Op. 11.\**

Matthews, Kell and Pini.

Columbia DX 1164-6. 12s.

An interesting example of early Beethoven, very well played and well recorded. The most rewarding movement is the set of variations on *Pria ch'io l'impegno* from Weigl's opera *L'Amor Marinaro*.

Handel : "He was despised" (*The Messiah*).\*

"He shall feed his flock" (*The Messiah*).

Gladys Ripley with the London Symphony Orchestra, c. Maurice Miles.

His Master's Voice C 3424. 4s.

Puccini : "Oh ! I entreat thee Fire" (*Turandot*).

"Thou who with ice art girdled" (*Turandot*).

Verdi : "No star shone on the heav'nly vault" (*Il Trovatore*).\*

"Love, fly on rosy pinions" (*Il Trovatore*).

Joan Hammond with the London Symphony Orchestra, c. Walter Susskind.

His Master's Voice B 9407. 3s. 3d.; C 3419. 4s.

William Busch : *Rest, The Laughing Song, Memory hither come, and  
The Centaurs.*

Henry Cummings and Ivor Newton.

Decca M 576. 3s. 3d.

The Verdi items and *He was despised* will hold their own in any company; in fact, they are first-class records in every respect. The other Handel aria is dull and respectable in the true oratorio tradition, while the recording of the Puccini excerpts is rough and produces an unpleasant buzzing noise on high notes. Both these operatic records, however, have style and verve—the two qualities for which one usually looks in vain in "Opera in English"; Joan Hammond reinforces her claim to be considered among the very few outstanding operatic singers in the country and Walter Susskind re-creates the true theatre atmosphere, even on the records, which is no mean feat.

The Busch songs were reviewed in our last issue. They show considerable promise and increase our sense of loss in the composer's recent and untimely death. The record is adequate, but would have been better with a more even balance between voice and piano.

G. N. S.

Eric Coates : "The Three Elizabeths".

National Symphony Orchestra, c. Coates.

Decca K 1109-10. 8s.

Had the composer written another of his fetching march tunes and left it at that, nothing need be said. They have a public and reap for him the benefits of skill and happy publicity. But he has written a three movement opus. The first movement is a rhapsody, symphonic in conception, the second a carefully planned "slow movement", and the finale a march. All this adds up to just another march to the well established Coates formula and three wasted sides.

Gluck : *Ballet Suite.*

Boston Promenade Orchestra, c. Fiedler.

His Master's Voice C 3420-1. 8s.

There are some of the loveliest melodies ever written in this suite, and the orchestration—due to the famous Mottl—does much to bring out their charm. Mr. Fiedler's orchestra specializes in performances of near-great, tuneful music, and they play this suite successfully except for a roughness of ensemble on the first and last sides.

Mozart : *Symphony in G.* K.318.\*

B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, c. Boult.

His Master's Voice DB 6172. 6s.

*Piano Concerto in A.* K.488.

Denis Matthews and Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Weldon.

Columbia DX 1167-9. 12s.

The playing of the Symphony—which is not a symphony but an Italian-style overture—shows the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra at their very best. There is balance and finesse, and especially pleasing is the horn and wood playing in the slow section. Boult realizes to perfection the crescendo passage in the final section, a passage which one cannot help feeling Rossini must have profited from. All must be congratulated on this record; it is technically good and provides an addition to recorded Mozart which many will wish to

possess. The Concerto recording does credit to Denis Matthews and no less to George Weldon. There is a tendency amongst pianists—aided and abetted by conductors—to romanticize this work, a treatment from which the first movement generally suffers most heavily. A sense of style is the essence of Mozart's concertos, and in this performance one is fully aware of listening to the composer's intentions.

*Rimsky-Korsakov : Russian Easter Festival Overture.*

N.B.C. Orchestra, c. Stokowski.

His Master's Voice DB 6173-4. 8s.

The middle section of this overture is devoted to the religious, as against the festive element, and is provided by a solo baritone voice. It is, one feels, not the unnamed singer's fault that his unusual contribution sounds distinctly thin; the fault is with the composer, whose scoring is characteristically brassy—and with the recording. The work is of high interest—especially in its rhythmic element—and if, in the concert hall, it is possible to redress the lack of balance apparent in the recording, it should be played more often.

*Johann Strauss : "Roses of the South".*

Hallé Orchestra, c. Barbirolli.

His Master's Voice C 3408. 4s.

and "*Vienna Life*" and "*Artist's Life*".

Andre Kostelanetz and his Orchestra.

Columbia DX 1170. 4s.

Records of Strauss Waltzes, Marches and Polkas, usually played by great orchestras, are now the fashion. Of recent issues these here reviewed represent the best and the worst. The Hallé record deserves mention both for the beauty of the playing and the excellence of the recording. "Light Orchestra" recordings of this music bore so because they avoid the detail of Strauss' scoring in the interests of a monotonous *umpty-tum-tum* tempo and a light *forte* tone. It is as if the perpetrators knew the destiny of their work to be the Women's Institute Dance or the Village Sale of Work. Utterly without taste and stylishness the Kostelanetz records should never have been made.

*Tchaikovsky : Piano Concerto No. 2 in G, Op. 24.*

Moiseiwitsch and Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Weldon.

His Master's Voice C 3410-3. 16s.

The orchestral part of this concerto is handled competently and Moiseiwitsch achieves the required piano coloratura. As to the work itself, it is comparatively rarely played, and one listener at least had only the slightest acquaintance with it. On re-making that acquaintance one is more conscious than in most other big Tchaikovsky works of the looseness of structure which characterizes so many of them. In this instance one has the feeling throughout the big first movement of a series of set pieces thoughtfully written. With what object escapes one . . . until one ceases to think about it and gives in to the undoubted vitality of the episodic writing. The second and best movement is a conversation piece with the piano making comments on a conversation between violin and cello. This is beautifully done and the violin and cello playing of Robertson and Pini deserves special notice.

*Wagner : Suite, Die Meistersinger.\**

Hallé Orchestra, c. Barbirolli.

His Master's Voice C 3416-7. 8s.

All taken from Act III, this set comprises the Prelude, Dance of the Apprentices, Procession of the Masters, Homage to Sachs and Finale. As orchestral records these are amongst the finest made in recent years. The playing is quite remarkable and the recording reproduces unusually well the detail, nuances and sonorities of an outstanding performance.

Wolf : "Overnight" and "Secrecy".

Richard Tauber with Orchestra, c. Geehl.

Parlophone RO 20536. 4s.

This recording is a shocking example of bad taste on the part of everyone concerned in its making. It is only fair that I should offer my reasons for this opinion, unworthy of space though the record is, and these are as follows:—

(a) Wolf was careful, on the title-pages of the mass of his songs, to describe them not as "Songs" but as "Songs for Voice and Piano". If orchestral accompaniments are used, at least they should be Wolf's. "Overnight", an early song published posthumously, was not orchestrated by the composer. "Secrecy" was, but the orchestration on the record is not his.

(b) Both orchestrations are technically weak.

(c) The "orchestra" is a kind of theatre ensemble of indeterminate composition. It includes a piano.

(d) The Tauber style and voice, as we have heard them on the stage and on many scores of Parlophone records, can never re-create the spirit of these songs.

Donizetti : "Spirit so Fair" (*La Favorita*), and

Bizet : "In Memory I Lie" (*Pearl Fishers*).

Heddle Nash and Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Sargent.

His Master's Voice C 3409. 4s.

The singing of the first of these arias is inexcusably bad, especially since the singer's contribution to the reverse side is its most satisfactory feature. Heddle Nash gets more than the appropriate amount of self-pity into his singing of the Donizetti, and after the passage "O, bitter shame", comes back to the main theme so choking with emotion that he forgets to sing and audibly chokes. The Bizet is sung too slowly, whereby the enchantment of the accompaniment is partly lost. Also, had the tempo been more normal there would have been space on the disc for the recitative, without which this aria should never be sung. It is a very great mistake to record dramatic arias of high musical quality shorn of recitative. To realize this, in the present case, one should play the old H.M.V. recording of Caruso singing the same aria in its musical context.

Handel : Recit. and Air, "Waft Her, Angels" (*Jephtha*).

Webster Booth and Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Sargent.

His Master's Voice C 3414. 4s.

*Overture and Pastoral Symphony (Messiah)*.

London Symphony Orchestra, c. Maurice Miles.

Columbia DX 1182. 4s.

*Sonata in D* for Violin and Piano.

Yehudi Menuhin and Marcel Gazelle.

His Master's Voice DB 6175-6. 12s.

Booth is happiest with a lyrical line, so that the aria comes out markedly better than the long *recitativo secco*. Excellent work by the orchestra helps to make the record worth buying. The playing of the *Messiah* excerpts is distinguished by some depth of feeling. To lovers of Handel's great work who have become inured to the perfunctory treatment of the overture and interlude which commonly blots public performances, this record is recommended.

According to the label, the Sonata in D owes its "realization" to Hugo Kauder. This presumably means that it is an arrangement of one of the *sonatas da camera*. It is best described as a four movement suite in any case. The playing is impeccable throughout on the part of both artists, and whatever the arranger's task has amounted to, the result is wholly pleasing.

*Balakirev : Oriental Fantasy, "Islamey".*

Louis Kentner.

Columbia DX 1175. 4s.

We do not need to be told that Liszt used to play this work. I am always surprised to remember that he did not compose it. Kentner's mechanics are equal to this kind of thing and here he achieves a sonority of tone for the reproduction of which the record deserves to be commended.

*Three Negro Spirituals ; Arr. Alwyn for Viola.*

Watson Forbes, acc. by Etienne de Chaulieu.

Decca M 577. 3s. 3d.

Judged by the label this is a slight and not very interesting record. Forbes, however, plays piano-accompanied viola solos very finely, and it is not his fault that the repertory is small. I doubt if it is small enough to justify his choice of these tunes, and remember a recent set of Rameau pieces he recorded, a re-playing of which gave much more pleasure than the present pieces simply because Rameau is music and these are *bric-à-brac*.

*Robin Orr : Sonatine for Violin and Piano.*

Max Rostal and Franz Osborn.

Decca K 1112. 4s.

This recording was made under the auspices of "The Committee for the Promotion of New Music". In welcoming this channel for the recording of so far unheard contemporaries I would like to address myself to the composer:—Your little work shows promise. The devastating attack made on it in certain quarters only means that you have no affinities with a certain established *école*. That need not worry you; on the contrary, originality at least is granted you. The present reviewer gives that quality its due and adds to it spontaneity and freshness. Some day may you find all else.

*Howard Ferguson : Five Bagatelles.*

Myra Hess.

His Master's Voice C 3423. 4s.

The piano writing of Howard Ferguson invariably evokes a sense of something experienced long before his music was heard. These clever little pieces bring that something out into the open; the first few bars produce immediately the Schumann-feeling. Four of the bagatelles use short, nervous, jerky scraps of tune in his vigorous and telling way, and, with the still Schumann-recalling slow measure of the remaining one, provide an impression of hearing something rather bigger than *bagatellen*. And that, after all, was also Schumann's secret. Myra Hess plays these things as if she loved them.

J. B.

[Gramophone records are still subject to the Chancellor's tax on art, at the rates shown in previous issues of this journal.]

## Correspondence

London, W.8.

19th March, 1945.

To the Editor, THE MUSIC REVIEW.

SIR,—In the February number of THE MUSIC REVIEW you were good enough to publish H. J. F.'s review of my recent book *Of Men and Music*. Your reviewer chose the easy road of damning it almost lock, stock and barrel, and I shall be the last to deny him the right and pleasure of doing so. But in view of the fact that the review contains many signs of hasty and careless reading, a number of inaccurate and misrepresenting statements and, moreover, shows bias and animus, I regret to say that it cannot be accepted as a true account and fair criticism of my book.

Yours faithfully,

Mosco CARNER.

To the Editor, THE MUSIC REVIEW.

### FIDELIO

SIR,—I do not "relent", but I hope Professor Dent will immediately repent. Epic and dramatic altitudes are no places for sophistication. The person who sees *Fidelio* for the first time, in English or any other language, wants, not direction found out by indirection, but Beethoven's truth. Why "First kill his wife", as a translation of "Tödt erst sein Weib", is "a poetical affectation" I am at a loss to understand. Professor Dent's rendering, "I am his wife", as I have heard it sung at Sadler's Wells (and this is no reflection on the singer), might just as well be the assertion of something mislaid suddenly coming to hand, e.g. "I am his knife". There may be no need, as he says, for Leonora to say "Kill me first", but she *does*, and she does *not* say "Ich bin sein Weib", or "Sein Weib bin ich", or "Ich bin Lohengrin genannt"! O, reason not the need. This is no mere assertion of identity, but the battle between love and hate. It is more impassioned than Nisus' tragic cry in Virgil:

Me, me (adsum qui feci) in me convertite ferrum

because here the defender is *attacking*. If the word "kill" be omitted, all the stab goes out of the phrase. Gesture is not enough. This is an armed creature risking life for its own. The cry is primitive, not social or Mozartian, and no translator should palter with primitive truth. These four words, as set, are perhaps the highest verbal vision of sheer heroism in Beethoven, and, *pace* Professor Dent, I do not see how any impact whatever, other than egotistic, can be got by any singer in the world into an initial "I". A consonant is required, and "First kill" is preferable to "Kill first" because that order is the more natural. To deal with such a moment other than literally is like substituting "nonsense" for "silence" in Hamlet's last words.

Yours faithfully,

E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN.







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VOL. XXXI, No. 1

JANUARY, 1945

## CONTENTS

Christmas Carols and <i>Crèches</i> in Provence	VIOLET ALFORD
The Music of William Schuman	NATHAN BRODER
Beethoven's Tribute to Mozart in <i>Fidelio</i>	MARK BRUNSWICK
Non-Quartal Harmony in the Renaissance	CHARLES WARREN FOX
John Christopher Pepusch	CHARLES W. HUGHES
Music and Musicians of the Dominican Republic:	
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